The UNKNOWN SANCTUARY

AIMÉ PALLIÈRE

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AIMÉ PALLIÈRE

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A PILGRIMAGE FROM ROME TO ISRAEL

By

AIMÉ PALLIÈRE

Translated from the French by

LOUISE WATERMAN WISE

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FOREWORD

By E. Fleg

Born on the slope of the pious hill of Fourvière, cradled by his mother in the charm of the Catholic faith, disciplined by the teachings of the religious school, destined by vocation for the seminary and the Church, Aimé Pallière is today one of the leading spokesmen of Judaism. He is listened to by orthodox, by liberals, by Zionists and assimilationists, all of whom seek his cooperation. Jewish journals of all shades welcome his writings.

And not only does he achieve this miracle of conciliating wholly opposite types of Israel, but he achieves the further miracle of being able to adopt a new religion without breaking with the old. Never was a heretic less banned. M. Pallière maintains so appreciative an attitude in regard to Rome that the faithful of the Church have not withdrawn their friendship from him. Churchmen introduced by him into Jewish circles have consented to speak under his leadership, and a Catholic publication has printed a sermon preached by him in the synagogue.

Having discovered in Israel the bearer of an ideal which is of importance to all humanity, M. Pallière, disciple of the illustrious Italian rabbi, Elijah Benamozegh, has conceived Judaism as a true Catholicism, which, without excluding the latter, transcends it, insofar as it includes within it, in vital synthesis, all the religious families of earth.

But as we shall see in reading his clear and serene confession, M. Pallière, in order to find the truth, was not compelled to experience the intellectual crisis, which tore the Catholic Renan from the arms of Christ, nor the sudden illumination which brought the Jew of Ratisbonne to the feet of the Virgin. His conversion was the gradual result of his personal experiences. The special Providence, which guided the seeming accidents of his life, touched his soul with the most varied emotions, and gave to them a new religious expression. Reversing the route by which Catholicism had developed from primitive Christianity, and primitive Christianity from Judaism, he became step by step the spiritual contemporary of those great Romans, who, at the time of the coming of Christ, were the proselytes of Israel. Almost unconsciously he realized that he had ceased to be a Christian and that he had been conquered by Judaism.

In this inevitable return journey the new convert

seems as yet a solitary pilgrim—but this may only seem to be so.

In fact, the dream of our prophets was never to impose on all peoples of earth those rites which were only obligatory upon the descendants of Abraham who founded a race of priests; and our sages forbade us to disturb the idolater at prayer, for they said, "Though he knows it not, his prayer addresses itself to the true God." What sages and prophets desired was, that without reducing the diversity of religious tongues, numerous as the human races, to uniformity, the spirit of justice and peace and love, revealed by God to our patriarchs, and preserved by their descendants, might come to live in the souls of all men.

And at last there seems to be a sign that this age-old hope may be realized amid the diverse faiths of the world. Might one not say that the ancient Messianism of Israel, which is become the religion of Pallière, is on the way to becoming the religion of humanity?

INTRODUCTION

On one of the hills of Rome, a Christian priest and a Jew met at the hour of sunset. At their feet the Forum, where so many vestiges of the past commingle in impressive disorder, became gradually enshadowed, and soon the monoliths, the columns, the tombstones, statues and bas-reliefs, became to their eyes indefinite things lost in the mists of night. Opposite to them, the last rays of the setting sun still gilded the dome of St. Peter's, surmounted by the cross. And the priest, giving full rein to his emotions, said, "What has become of this Roman paganism which believed itself triumphant, filling the world with its haughty emblems? The Forum where darkness now reigns gives us the answer:—ruins—naught but ruins! And Hellenism with its poetic and sensual myths, captive to beauty and forgetful of morals—and the powerful cults of which we find the cryptic symbols in the trenches of Nineveh, in the ruins of Balbeck, in the debris of Carthage, the religions of Isis and of Osiris or of the goddess Tanit? Ruins yet again! And your Judaism, all the imperishable essence of which has passed into the great religion for which it was pre-

paration—fore-runner—what is it now—without temple, without priests, without altar? A ruin, only a ruin! Look there on the other hand, and see the cross that gleams, symbol of that Christian civilization summoned to redeem the world. He must be blind indeed who does not perceive it! Here the shadows that creep abroad—there the light; here death and silence—there life and its sources of vitality ever renewed; on the one side that which is past and forgotten, on the other side the future and its hope!"

Thus spake the priest. And those who think that such words proceed only from the lips or from the pens of conforming Christians, are vastly mistaken. Under one guise or another, they are repeated everywhere as indisputable truths. In vain we choose to ignore them. They appear in magazine articles, in the pages of popular novels, in some part of a discourse, on the lecture platform, or in the Academy. Whether you are interested in art, science, poetry, literature, politics, sociology, you will be sure to come upon them. And even those liberal thinkers who believe that science and the spirit of progress have now outstripped Christianity, are ready to agree that if Christianity has had its day, Judaism, which preceded it, is even more obviously outworn; its conception of life and of the

world is now without value and it were absurd to seek to revive it in our day.

Renan, whose Christian bias more than once dimmed his critical sense, gave the formula for this religious philosophy of history when he wrote: "Having produced Christianity, Judaism still lingers on as the barren trunk of the tree, together with the one living branch."

If this wide-spread opinion were justified, the attitude of the Jew, who still remains faithful to his own traditions, could only be explained as the last homage paid to the glories of the past, but the attitude of a Christian by birth, who deliberately embraces Judaism, would seem unthinkable and shocking. It would seem to be the abandonment of the life and joy of a populated and prosperous city, in order to take one's place light-heartedly amidst tombs.

I would that the following pages might serve as a witness against Renan's theory. I have often been besought to set down these reminiscences and have always felt reluctant to do so. I know well that converts from every church and from every party have the habit of telling the public the origin and various stages of their evolution. Thus they most often obey the need of explaining their conduct to their enemies, and of pointing out to their

old co-religionists the errors which they desired to abandon, and the new light which they believe they have received.

I felt little inclination to follow the example of those writers of biographies whose chief aim is to justify themselves in the eyes of others. I have always—God be praised—enjoyed those inward blessings, which are ample compensation for the slight inconvenience of not being generally understood. He who has peace of mind and conscience is also—there is no doubt about it—at peace with Heaven, despite the clamor with which earth may seek to trouble him.

One day a devout believer, the passion of whose life was the study of religion, said to me with a peculiar smile, "Is the only true Christian really he who has become a Jew?" Surely the irony disclosed by these words was not alone for me, for my religious experience seemed to him sufficiently rational and in conformity to the will of God, to require no justification.

I am very far from contesting the effect that public confessions may have on the outside world. I merely believe that every conversion is an essentially personal act, the psychology of which may be of more or less interest, but which, being deter-

mined by a conjunction of personal circumstances, does not necessarily serve for general guidance.

In my case, however, more was involved than an individual conversion. It is truly an unknown sanctuary into which I entered, and I do believe it may be of great service both for Jews and non-Jews to lift the heavy veil which hides it from all eyes—for the edifice which I beheld is incomparably more beautiful than any built by the hands of men. Lofty enough to house the highest aspirations, vast enough to hold all the worshippers of the true God, and to help them to become brothers!

If then these intimate revelations, written with sincerity and scrupulous care, can serve the cause which is dear to me, and be of help to any souls in their study of the problems of religion, I shall not regret having overcome the hesitation which I felt at the thought of this task, and I shall feel justified in having undertaken it.

I

GUSTAVE DORÉ'S BIBLE

THERE are cities that have a soul and others that have none. Lyons is a city with a soul and its character is clearly marked. But the soul of this populous town, the quiet of which offers so great a contrast to its commercial activity, is rare and subtle. She unveils herself to the hurried passer-by, but she demands long acquaintance before revealing her inmost charm.

An atmosphere of mysticism has always obtained in the old Gallo-Roman city, centre of ceaseless toil. The mists which so often veil its skies, encourage the unfolding of small independent sects, which have existed in Lyons, but have never been able to extend beyond. The little "Anticoncordat" Church still survives in a state of touching anachronism. Vintras left some followers there and Gnosticism still holds its disciples. Nevertheless, Catholicism which has ceaselessly opposed the recurrent tides of harmless heresy is above all benefited by the religious bent of the soul of Lyons.

To appreciate this peculiar aspect of Lyons, one

must cross the hill of Fourvière, dotted by convents and chapels, and dominated by the great Basilica with its four massive towers as by a fortress. Perfect peace reigns in this religious quarter, and all things breathe of ineffable sadness. The high windowless walls between which one walks have a sad, but not hostile look. Behind these bare facades, the birds sing on beautiful days, amid the fresh woods and in the shadow of exquisite chapels, perfumed by incense and by flowers; and sweet voices murmur in never ending prayers. This peaceful haunt, far from the noises of the great city, does not merely shelter the contemplative life. The worst of human sufferings find refuge there and such is the charity of Lyons, wise as well as brave, that the greatest ladies come there to care with their own delicate hands for those most repulsively plague-stricken. Above all this, stands amidst the constant pealing of bells, the image of the Madonna, queen of the pious city, inspirer of her hidden devotions. It was in this city and exactly upon this holy hill that I was born. I grew up in this pious atmosphere, still saturated with the memories of the martyrs, Pothinus, Blandine, Ireneus, who had watered this soil with their blood. I took my first walks in the garden of the Minimes, redolent of the scent of acacias which strewed the turf with their

white petals, and on this route of Sainte Foy where one enjoys so marvellous a view of Lyons and the juncture of the Rhône and the Saône.

Nevertheless, in the first chapters of my childhood memory I really do not find the great deeds of Christian history stand out so clearly as do Bible scenes. In fact what could a little lad of sensitive temperament, who hated noisy games, do during the long winter days when the fogs of the Rhône prevented his going to school—what could he do but look at beautiful pictures? I do not think there ever was a child more passionately devoted to that occupation than was I. I have often been told that no one knew how I learned to read, but I know it was through contemplating the beautifully illuminated Persian pictures that illustrated the Arabian Nights, may favorite book. But the greatest joy was to be able to gaze entranced at the matchless engravings of the Bible of Gustave Doré.

These two enormous volumes in red binding, too large for a library shelf, are hidden away in some large family closet. Your mother is their guardian and goes to find one of them to lay it before your ravished eyes if you have been very good. Once open, this book requires a table all to itself, and you are perched on your chair where old books of no importance are piled up and soft cushions to place

you on an equal height with the great book. And the dear mother's hands, slowly, reverently turn the pages to show you the splendid pictures of a world of epic grandeur and lovely poetry. Behold the gorgeous titles, the earthly paradise and its serpent, the murder of Abel, the deluge and the phantasmagoria of Noah's Ark. Here is the father of all the faithful, knife in hand, ready to sacrifice his beloved son, the wanderings of Jacob in symbolic visions, the touching incidents in the story of Joseph.

And finally the Hebrews, the enslaved people, building for the glory of the Pharaohs the cities of Pithom and Rameses, there the people liberated through the call of Moses and crossing the Red Sea, where the Egyptians are to be engulfed. On one page the wild dance around the golden calf, at the foot of Sinai; on another the great law-giver dying alone on Nebo, in sight of the Promised Land wherein he was not to enter. Then, Joshua, and the trumpets of Jericho, and the battle of Gibeon which saw the sun stand still; David, conqueror of the Philistines, by turns now culpable and now repentant, transported with joy before the Ark, overwhelmed with grief by the news of the death of Absalom, his son, killed in the forest of Ephraim. There is the glorious and enigmatic Solomon on his

throne; Hiram of Tyre, tracing with great compasses the plans of the temple of Jerusalem; the magnificent cortege of the Queen of Sheba coming to visit the very wise and unimpressionable monarch.

Then there is Elijah finding refuge in his cave after having destroyed the priests of Baal. Hezekiah, humbly imploring the deliverance of his people from the hands of the Assyrian; Jeremiah prophesying national catastrophies, in the precincts of the Temple. And here is Zedekiah, last king of Judah, taken prisoner in Babylon. These men, sadly seated beside the green river-banks, these are the Hebrew captives. But let us turn the page, it is they again who return with the permission of Cyrus and rebuild the Temple, while lamenting the lost splendors of the ancient Sanctuary. Here the beautiful parable of Jonah and Nineveh converted. There, that of Job on his dunghill receiving the consolation of his friends. Ah, the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes!

The revolt of the Maccabees, the martyrdom of the seven brothers, encouraged by their heroic mother, the youngest and last proudly facing the tyrant: "I will not obey the command of the king, but the precept of the law which was given us by Moses. I gladly surrender, as did my brothers, my body and my soul in defense of the laws of my

fathers, imploring God speedily to show mercy to our nation." The Maccabees! what regret I felt later on turning the leaves of my Hebrew Bible not to find therein this beautiful book! Was all this religion? No. What was there in common between the carnal circumcision of the Hebrews and our very holy baptism which instantly transforms a little child into an angel of purity worthy of all heavenly blessings? What relation between our Eucharistic communion and the Passover of the armies of Moses, eating the lamb roasted at the fire, the girded loins, staff in hand in the haste of departure? In truth no relation whatever. No sacraments to sanctify the halting places of life! but discipline; rigid laws to bend to providential ends a stiff-necked people. No sacraments, therefore no religion, but an epic poem, the prodigious epic of a chosen people, set apart, to conserve at whatever the cost, in the midst of idolatrous peoples, the faith in the true God in preparation for the coming of the Messiah, who must be born of this race. The Messiah!

Pivotal point of its history, the one name which was given to men thru which they might be saved. He it is who comes to found religion here on earth. Before him, all were but unreal shadows. But it was distinctly written that the people which

must give him to the world would not believe in him, and, its mission ended, would be blotted out from history. For behold Daniel, the youths in the furnace, the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the tragic feast of Belshazzar, and in the ninth chapter, in the midst of the prophets' visions, the announcement of the condemnation of Israel: "After sixty-two weeks, the Messiah shall be put to death and the people who will reject him will no longer be his people," all this being written, clear as the day in the two small Hebrew words *veen lo* of this prophetic chapter.

Poor Israel! what a sad destiny is hers, but her epic poem is none the less beautiful and glorious. Gustave Doré might illustrate an edition of the Odyssey or the Æneid and that would furnish material for other splendid pictures. The only difference would be that these engravings would magnify fairy tales while those of the great Bible place in relief the true history of a people whose unique call was to bring salvation. This is what I learned while the visible angel that God gives to little children gently turned the pages of the big book for me.

* * *

In the district school which I frequented most irregularly, it must be said, there were three little Cohens. They were most singular boys. At first

they remained seated, absent-minded and indifferent, whilst we perched on our knees, on our benches to recite the prayer: Hail, Mary, full of grace! And I threw severe glances toward them, finding in their irreverence toward the mother of God for whom I felt a very special devotion, the utmost impropriety. They had other strange ways. Thus on the eve of the Sabbath they seemed only to come to school to escape their parents, for they did nothing at all, and kept their hands in their pockets during dictation. Then on this day they suddenly became incapable of tearing the smallest bit of paper. We could tear it up under their noses. "Do you want some? There!"—nothing availed; they could not imitate us, poor things. How far off is the time when the clear light of day will explain such incredible things! Without doubt the story of these queer actions was passed from mouth to mouth; these strange schoolfellows were little Jews, but never, never in the world did the idea strike me that there could be the slightest connection between them and my remote Hebrews of magnificent stature. But, it was soon necessary to leave this school to enter the great institution where no Cohen of any sort would ever enter. And later it was also necessary to sell, as too great an encumbrance, too difficult to carry about, the beautiful Doré Bible. I saw it go with

regret, for its engravings had not lost their charm for me, and had not ceased to teach me many things of this old Israel, which had loved, battled, suffered, and is dead, so that little Christians may assist at mass, and piously pray to the holy Virgin.

II

BROTHER ALIX

Two religious impressions dominate all the memories of my childhood, both so profound that I cannot recall them without emotion.

In the beginning it was but a dream, simply a dream, which had for me all the value of a revelation. I do not know what could have been the religious dreams of the children of the exiled Hebrews on the bank of the Chebar in Babylon, at the time when Ezekiel had the great visions set down in his book, but of what would a little Catholic boy of Lyons be likely to dream, if not of the sweet image he so often beheld in the Chapel of Fourvière, and in truth it was the Virgin Mary whom I beheld in my dreams, she assuring me in such a manner of her maternal benediction, and of the well-being of which this favor was the pledge, that I awoke in the morning in an indescribable ecstasy.

My mother noticed that something unusual was happening within me, but questioned me for a long time in vain. I did not wish to speak of it, fearing to lose the impression of the celestial vision by

words too gross, too inadequate to express what I felt. When at last I decided to tell my mother of my visions, she tenderly kissed me, and knew how to find good and pious words to draw lessons of wisdom from the dream that had made so vivid an impression upon me. I might have been eight or nine years old at that time and the intense piety that I showed from that moment was considered as the first indication of a religious call.

I began to say that some day I would be a priest and prepared myself with great care for my first communion. This was the other great religious impression of my youth and it was because of this that I was entered into a church college. The intention was praiseworthy, and can alone justify in my eyes the imprisonment to which I was condemned, and which to a nature such as mine was veritable torture. It is doubtful whether children who remain in their homes can receive an education comparable to that which I had the good fortune to have had in that institution. There the days of retreat which precede the ceremony are unforgetable.

The new communicants are set apart and freed from all work unconnected with religious exercises. Three times daily the services unite those in retreat in the chapel; chants, prayers, addresses succeed

one another with absolute certainty of the desired results. Everything is so arranged as to inculcate in the child the conviction that his whole life depends upon the act he is about to perform,—nay, even his eternal salvation. He may have made mistakes in the course of his life, but if he has had a good first communion he will always rediscover the right path, and his ultimate salvation will be assured. But who is certain to bring to the accomplishment of this great act the right attitude? Who can answer for the adequacy of his preparation? The consciousness of the gravity of the hour, of the fearful responsibility weighs heavily on the conscience. It is a matter of meeting with God. Woe to the frivolous or the hypocrite who permits this hour of grace to pass by! The lightest-hearted grow serious and frightened.

Nevertheless all terrors were banished for us in the days of solemn preparation, thanks to the incomparable master to whose care we were entrusted. He was a simple brother, the value of whose instruction was next to nothing. Ordinarily he busied himself with the linens and was never able even to teach the younger classes. But he was a saint and no one understood as did he how to deal with the souls of children. Brother Alix,—I may call him by his name, for long since he has entered into

the glory of his Lord,—had the matchless charm which radiates from a pure soul wholly consecrated to God. His clear childlike eyes had a changeless serenity and the constant smile on his lips, lighting up his frank and good face, revealed the depth of joy found in that conception of happiness which is not of this world.

I only vaguely recall the father who preached the sermons during retreat; while I always see the smile of Brother Alix, with whom we spent our hours of recreation and every moment that religious exercises left us free. If today I were to read the exhortations lavished upon us by the good brother, probably I should discover profound truths, possibly also some platitudes; but that which cannot be rendered again is the accent of conviction which touched all his words, and the religious ardor which emanated from his entire being. When on the morning of the first communion, we went to receive the blessing of our masters, the goodly inclinations of which our souls were full were in large part the work of this good brother. How noble a role is that of the teachers charged with the preparation of children for the most important act of their religion! And how easy, too, if they understand and know how to utilize the possibilities of the moment! The ceremonies of the first communion I have held in

unfading remembrance, due to the devoted preparation I had received. But I also recall the unutterable melancholy which overcame me the evening after vespers, when my parents, who had come for the services, were obliged to leave. Was it possible! It was already passed, the great day so eagerly awaited! It is thus that the child learns the brevity of life's joys, but the joys of such a day are at least among that number which do not wholly pass, and to what is truly abiding and divine in them I have never been unfaithful.

III

NEILA

It is difficult for me to envisage the state of mind of a young Israelite of our country, brought up with the basic notion that Judaism after all is not a religion like others, and that, even though it count but a limited number of adherents, it is none the less the most perfect, the only true religion. Practices that seem to him the very law of God are more and more abandoned, in any case incompletely observed and with so much difficulty even by the most faithful, that they often find it needful to abandon them entirely. The whole edifice of worship which he sees crumbling, falling stone by stone, claims to be the temple of truth on earth; and at the same time this youth assimilates all the Western culture upon which Christianity has so strongly impressed itself. He studies our classics, he reads Bossuet, he visits our cathedrals where the believing heart of the middle ages still beats.

Each day he finds himself face to face with the great fact—Christianity—which gives him no

reasonable explanation, which overrules and crushes his little family tradition, with all the fulness, with all the magnificence, with all the authority conferred upon it by the veneration of many peoples. How then under such conditions can his faith remain unshakeable? And, for the most part one sees him forsake his own beliefs, without adopting those of the others. For the young Christian, on the contrary, loyalty is put to a less severe test, above all, when one is brought up, as was I, in an environment where skill was used, carefully to keep out of one's way every thing that might serve as pretext for objections. The divorce which obtains between the church and modern society may not be entirely concealed from him, but he is helped to find within the teachings of his own catechism, on the origin of evil, sufficient reason to explain their apparent inconsistencies.

Thus until my seventeenth year I never felt the slightest doubt about the divinity of the church as the only logical form of Christianity, considered to be the very expression of truth given here below. The desire which awoke within me at an early age to give to the holiness of Catholic doctrine the signature of my entire life, grew stronger within me, without the need of any one to urge me in that direction. The only allusion that a man of faintly

mystic faith once permitted himself to make before me, vaunting the material advantages of a church career, would rather have turned me from it had I been less strongly attracted by the priesthood. But it was tacitly understood by my people that I was called to enter the seminary later on.

Renan has said that the true token of a calling is the utter incapacity to do anything else well. This observation is right, and I may say that I was indubitably destined for a religious ministry, since anything I could do outside of that career was only for me a thing aside, temporary, or of secondary importance, to which I bent myself with difficulty. And if today I write these pages, it is without doubt with the secret purpose to preach to my friends, known and unknown, a sermon in my own way. I can only hope it may be less tiresome to them than many other sermons.

When I was seventeen years of age a strange incident occured which came to exercise an influence over my whole life. I call the attention of my friendly readers to what I am about to relate to them. On a certain Thursday in the autumn when I was still on my vacation at Lyons, I was walking with a comrade on the Quai Tilsitt where the synagogue stands. We noticed that a number of shops had remained closed that day. My companion had

heard that it was the great festival of the Jews and suggested to me that we enter the temple. I consented not without hesitation. Alone I would never have done it, for the pious Catholic does not permit himself to enter any building belonging to another religion, and for strong reasons he must abstain from taking part in any ceremony. The synagogue was quite filled. All the votaries were standing and silent. I understood later that I had arrived at the moment of the prayer of Neila* on Yom Kippur.**

I will seek to analyse the impression that I felt in contemplating that which met my gaze. It was such that from that unique moment my life was to be shaped. This may seem inexplicable, and for me it is an unfathomable enigma, but all my plans for the future were to be upset and finally ended. I was to find myself unconsciously led in a direction which would have roused my indignant protestations, if at that moment it had been revealed to me. There was not within me reflection or reasoning of any kind, and for a long time nothing was to manifest the change which was to come into my life, and nevertheless everything dates from then.

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*Neila—the prayer at the close of the Atonement Day known as "the closing of the gate."

** Yom Kippur—Day of Atonement.

Thus the traveler who through inadvertence decides at a crossway on a route apparently parallel to the one he wishes to take, finds, after a long journey, that he is at a great distance from the point at which he thought to arrive.

Did I then feel on that memorable occasion an intense and decisive religious sensation? Not at all. Alphonse Ratisbonne, worldly and sceptic, remaining alone a few instants in the church of St. Andrea delle Fratte in Rome, left it converted to Catholicism, following a mysterious inner vision. The Jewish musician Hermann, replacing a friend as organist at a Vesper Service, in a church in Paris, is suddenly flung to his knees—and rises a Catholic and becomes Father Hermann. Here we have natural facts which we may discuss and which in any case are not conversions of Jews, but conversions of souls with unconscious religious needs unsatisfied; subjugated, enraptured, they totally abandon themselves to the first revelation offered them.

But for a religious nature, subject to an habitual rule of piety, similar emotions may be produced, without leading to any results of this kind. I, myself, certainly experienced a most vivid impression the first time I was present at a Friday prayer in a great mosque. But this gave me no desire to become a

Mussulman, and, however great is the admiration which I profess for the great monotheistic religion of these good people, there is no likelihood that I shall ever embrace Islam. In the fact that I recount there is certainly something quite different. Then, too, the Jewish cult does not generally produce a religious emotion in the Christian, but rather a feeling of strangeness. All is too new for him, too different in form from that to which he is accustomed, and which is bound up in his eyes with the idea of religion. Ordinarily he enjoys precisely the things borrowed from his own environment; the songs, the organ, the majesty of the service. That which is especially Jewish, escapes him. In order to discover in the traditional Jewish service the element of adoration, the non-Jew requires an acquaintance, a veritable initiation; perhaps even the knowledge of Hebrew, which makes it possible to penetrate to the meaning of the prayers. It is therefore all the more interesting to discover what could possibly strike a young Catholic, suddenly introduced, without any preparation, into a Jewish assembly on the Day of Atonement, and that had so marked an effect on his spirit.

That which revealed itself to me at that moment was not at all the Jewish religion. It was the Jewish people. The spectacle of that large number of men

assembled, their shoulders covered by *Taliths**, suddenly disclosed to my eyes a far-off past. The Hebrews of the Doré Bible were there on their feet before me. But two details struck me particularly while I noticed all about me the faithful bent over their ritual. At first on seeing the prayer-shawls uniformally worn by all the participants in the service, I thought that in a way they were all officiating. Several of them robed in white shrouds were scattered about here and there in the crowd just like the priests who remained in the centre of the sanctuary. In the second place it seemed to me that this silent assembly was in expectancy of something about to happen. What are they waiting for, I asked my companion. This double aspect which Judaism disclosed to me held nothing that could trouble the faith of a young Christian such as I then was. But thus was revealed to me at least very clearly, so that I could understand what followed, two characteristic traits; the form of collective priesthood of which the Judaism of the dispersion consisted, and the spirit of expectancy and of faith in the future which stamps its entire cult with a special seal.

In fact, in the synagogue service all Jews are equal, all are priests, all may participate in the

*Shawl, worn by the Orthodox Jew at prayer.

holy functions, even officiate in the name of the entire community, when they have the required training. The dignity which distinguished the *Hakham,* the doctor, the sage, is not a clerical degree but rather one of learning and of piety quickened thru knowledge. The Talith would have given me the understanding of that peculiarity of Judaism which would have escaped me, had my attention not been captured from the first by this spectacle so new to me, of a multitude of men in white shawls at prayer. It is thus that rites and symbols often constitute a more expressive language than the best of discourses. The practices which have had the consecration of centuries come to us charged with the accumulated thoughts of believing generations. They preserve the poetry, the incomparable power of evocation. They may be suppressed, but not replaced.

A precious legacy of antiquity, and yet Judaism's trend is not toward the past, but toward the future. An unconquerable faith in the final triumph of the good and the true has preserved it during the centuries and permeates it through and through. It awaits the Messiah. This attitude gives an unusual aspect to its secular points of view. Whenever the modern conscience busies itself with ideals of social regeneration, whenever it affirms its will to build

the city of the future upon the ruins of wrongs and injustices, it is in communion with the soul of Judaism as it has not ceased to vibrate in the course of its long history. Later I was to understand how the aspirations of national resurrection complete and define in Israel this attitude of expectancy, so different from the conceptions of other religions, but from my first contact this spirit revealed itself to me in the silent "amida" of the closing of Yom Kippur.

And this it was that made another impression upon me, which was less confused, and was to be more decisive. Fancy a young Christian, brought up in the naive conception that the Old Testament had no mission other than preparation for the New which was definitely to replace it, and that since the advent of Christianity the rôle of Israel had come to an end. The Jew lives on today only as a blind and powerless witness of the truth of prophecies fulfilled to his hurt. Every Christian brought up within the pale of the church thinks of him as the Wandering Jew of the legend—"March, march, Ahasuerus; wandering and alone, thou bearest the stigma of hopeless condemnation."

And now suddenly Israel appeared to me, still living its own life, with nothing to indicate the foretold decrepitude. This Judaism of the diaspora

appeared to me a strongly organized collectivity, which since nineteen hundred years, in despite of the will to destroy conjured up against it, continued to exist for ends that I still did not grasp, but in which I felt that my Christianity was no longer directly interested. All my philosophy of history was confounded. The three years of public life of Jesus no longer formed its central point. It became a simple episode in the whole. Thus in the teaching that I had received until that day, I discovered a lacuna, and the premise being false, the conclusions must be equally false. The legitimacy of the secular protestation of Judaism against the Christian pretentions stood out at this first contact, in a vague way assuredly as yet, but nevertheless in such a way that the impression could never be effaced. Israel has still the right to live. Israel lives.

This is what I realized on that day. In saying that it was not the Jewish religion, but the Jewish people which revealed itself to me at that moment, I set down a fact that was only clear to me personally. In truth, for the most part concerning the men who surrounded me and who to my eyes were so visibly of different descent from my own, the idea of their *raison d'être,* of their historic rôle, of their powers of resistance and persistence

was doubtlessly very vague, almost non-existent. Nonetheless it emanated from the collective spirit of these Jews re-gathered. The breath of the race filled the precincts of the synagogue and my own soul was penetrated by it.

Beloved and ancient race which holds so much of grandeur and of moral wealth side by side with so many defects, some day I shall know some of thy beautiful spirits, true Jews of biblical times, still vibrant with ever renewed youth. I shall understand thee and love thee to the point of being able to say to thee with Ruth, "May the Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." But it was on this Day of Atonement that my eyes first beheld thee and that I knew that thou wast ever a people blessed by the Eternal!

When I was a child I was occasionally taken to visit a very old lady who had been an intrepid traveler. Thirty-three times in succession she had pilgrimed to Jerusalem, and on her mantlepiece she kept small frames brought from Palestine, in which were enclosed fragments of olive wood and dried flowers. These precious frames were shown to me and I piously pressed them to my childish lips. I was not conscious then of the significance of a kiss upon the flowers of the Holy Land, but began to understand from my first visit to the syna-

gogue. It was the homage unconsciously rendered to the biblical treasures which come to us from this sacred soil, to the revelation of the holy "Torah," to the piety of the Psalms, to the faith of the ancient prophets, to all that the Hebrew scriptures contain that is vital to humanity.

And it was also the homage rendered to the people of the Bible toward whom the nations have shown themselves so ungrateful and whom they have overwhelmed with contempt and injustice without remembering that from them they have received the treasure of revelation; the people who despite all things resisted, survived, while other great peoples, Assyrians, Egyptians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans have disappeared from the face of the earth. Ground to dust among the nations, this people has nevertheless survived as a living entity—preserved for providential ends, and on that day my eyes beheld them.

Would the result have been the same for me, if instead of entering a synagogue, I had been present at some great manifestation of Jewish life such as a Zionist Congress—for example? It may possibly be so, nevertheless in the mood that I then was, if one take into account my education and my inclinations, one must admit that no other aspect of Judaism could have impressed me to a greater degree

than its religious vitality, and there is certainly no other which interprets in more characteristic fashion the secular genius and the role of Israel.

This was the revelation that came to me on that Thursday in October, in the synagogue of Lyons. And surely words are too inadequate to express anything so confused, so mysterious to me at that moment; and for some time I could not formulate that impression in my thoughts, still less interpret it to the outside world. But with me, like a germ implanted by the Neila, this revelation was to affirm itself and grow stronger and stronger.

Near me, within reach of my hand, I noticed a book of prayer, left on a stall. I opened it. The unfamiliar characters had the effect upon me of notes of strange music, that I looked upon with curiosity. The next day I bought a Hebrew grammar on the Quai, and quite alone I set myself to study Hebrew.

IV

A SECOND-HAND BOOK

A SHORT time after the event I have just recounted, I lost my father and my brother in succession. I remained alone with my tenderly loved mother and continued my studies, under conditions which gave me much more liberty than I would have had at the college. I made use of it in order to continue the study of Hebrew, and gave myself no rest until I had learned to read. Soon I was able slowly and almost correctly to decipher the verses of a little psalter published by the Bible Society, which I had succeeded in getting by chance.

But the volume that I had bought, entitled Hebrew Studies, could not take me very far. I cannot give the name of the author, the title page, together with the preface, having been torn out at the time of binding. The reason for this is most singular. The author protested vehemently against the Massorah* that had by means of vowel points determined the pronunciation of the sacred tongue. He says in his preface, "The time has come to blow

*Tradition concerning the Hebrew text.

away the particles of dust that the rabbis have strewn over the most beautiful pages of the Bible." The method of reading without vowel points, which he extolled, the anti-synagogue and anti-massoretic spirit of this work displeased me, and that is why I eliminated this preface. The little grammar by Chabot which I procured a short time thereafter enabled me to study a less fanciful Hebrew, and I threw myself into this work with eagerness.

It was strange that I chose to learn the 145th Psalm by heart after having analysed it word by word with the help of Latin. I was wholly ignorant of the fact that it is just this psalm that has a place of honor in the Jewish liturgy. I still see myself walking, on a Thursday, in the gardens of the Chartreuse repeating the verses one by one until I knew them without a mistake and asking myself why the letter *nun* was lacking in the alphabetic order of this psalm. I did not attach any religious meaning to this recital, foreign to the forms of my own accustomed worship. It was an oddity on my part possibly mingled with some secret vanity at being able to pray in a tongue other than that of the church, but my Catholic faith remained intact and the impression made by the synagogue seemed completely forgotten. In reality it slumbered, and

a discovery made in the old bookshop was soon to reawaken it and give to it new impetus.

One day, in a basket of books exhibited on the Quai du Rhône, I took up a small volume, quite old and apparently ignored by the book-hunters, for I found it buried in the midst of poor worthless books. It bore the title "Ceremonies and Customs at the present time observed among the Jews, translated from the Italian of Leon of Modena, Rabbi of Venice" by Sieur de Simonville. The bookseller sold it to me for two francs "because of the engraving on copper," a reproduction of a canvas of the Flemish school, which it carried on the frontispiece. To me it was worth a fortune and more, and I have cherished it always.

This work, printed at the Hague by Adrien Moetjens, 1682, is dedicated to "Monsignore Bossuet, one time bishop of Condom, called by His Majesty to the diocese of Meaux." A note in writing traced in Chinese ink on the back of the engraving in the letters and orthography of the time, informed me that under the name de Simonville, Simon, a one-time priest, disguised himself, and it was said that he was none other than Richard Simon, the father of Bible criticism.

In the preface and in the supplement of 166 pages added to the work of Leon of Modena, the translator

shows a very special sympathy with Jews and an evident desire to point out the conformity of their principles with those of Christians, the purity of their morals and the beauty of their worship. He gives proof of profound knowledge in these matters of which priests in general are most ignorant.

Note with what cleverness he shows the importance that Judaism should have in the eyes of Christians. He there compromises the Eagle of Meaux. "Your excellency," he says, "having proven that one cannot understand the Christian religion, if one is not instructed in that of the Jews, whose faith was its pattern, I thought, being under the obligation I am to you, that I ought contribute to so noble an end. This it is, Sir, that has moved me to choose a rabbi enlightened in these matters." And further on: "For who knows these things so thoroughly as does your Grace, you, I say, who have so aptly cited in your Treatise of Universal History, the most rare and most ancient works of the Jews, and who drew from them with so much strength of spirit, the truth concerning the most perplexing mysteries of the Christian religion. I am persuaded that if your Grace will have the goodness to permit me, I shall be sustained herein by all the world."

There is something of the biting irony of the Provincials in this hyperbolic dedication.

Let us listen to the Sieur de Simonville speaking seriously: "Those who compiled the New Testament being Jews, it is impossible to explain it, except by their relation to Judaism. The doctrine is almost the same, and as to the morals, the decalogue is common to them and to us." Again, "As to the Jewish traditions rejected by our Lord, he only pretended to combat some false traditions that the Jewish scholars had added to the older ones and when this wise Master sent us to the written law *Scrutamini Scripturas*,* one must not imagine that he wished to send us back to the simple text of the scripture, but to this same text explained by the wise men who had followed Moses." "They are seated," he says in speaking of these doctors, "in the seat of Moses,—observe—do that which they tell you." The author takes pains to tell us that "The first fathers of the Church revered the Sabbath as Sunday, that the prayers of Jews are most pious and differ but little from our own, and that the Jews not only excel in prayers, but also in charity." Were it right to reproach them for their formalism, for the value they attach to minute practices? It is true, observes the Sieur de Simon-

*Search the Scriptures.

ville, that the Jews make much of the outside of things, but that is, they say, because all outward actions are but to direct the inward. Thus in washing their hands, they think of cleansing their conscience; in abstaining from impure animals, to prevent themselves from committing crimes; and they consider the precepts for external things as having an inner application.

I read this entire work at one sitting with extraordinary delight. I do not think any reading ever interested me to such a degree. When I had read it from beginning to end, I began it again. The Hebrews of the Doré Bible took on life again little by little in my eyes, and this time I naturally associated them with the faithful I had seen at prayer in the synagogue. Thanks to Leon of Modena, who had accurately described for me, without any apparent thought of apologetics, religious rites, their liturgy, their practices and the laws which regulate their conduct even to the slightest details, the Jews became again for me a living people, perfectly organized, subject to a wise discipline which made sure their miraculous preservation. All the charm of the family life, all the poetry of the life of the ghetto, somberly portrayed by the Rabbi of Venice, revealed itself to my imagination, with incredible clarity, not as a new discovery, but as an

old fact that I had forgotten. It seemed to me that I had always known this people on which Judaism had left so strong an imprint and who exist in the midst of other peoples without mingling with them, "respectful of laws, obedient to their ruler, praying God to preserve them in peace and in gladness, that His aims may be accomplished, that His lands may multiply and that He may love our nation."

But it was written that a combination of minute circumstances would unite to effect a predestined result. I still had in my pocket, after repeated reading, the little book by Leon of Modena when chancing to read one day the "Messager Boiteux"* of Strasbourg, I noticed the Jewish calendar following that of the Christian year. I tore out the page to keep it and examine it at leisure. Thus I learned on which day that year Yom Kippur would fall, which the Rabbi of Venice had explained to me, and I made my plan to return to the synagogue on that day. This time I saw the procession of the *Sepharim* and I heard the tinklings of the little bells, which I knew to be *Rimonim*. I also knew from which passage the reading was taken in the holy scroll. The service interested me more than on my first visit.

I had a professor who loved me much and for

*A popular almanac.

whom I myself felt a sincere affection. The Abbé Neyret was an excellent priest, pious and gentle, but his mind was closed to everything foreign to theology. When he learned that I had returned to the synagogue, he seemed disturbed. Priests have a peculiar intuition concerning things which may constitute danger to the faith. He had me come to him on a certain afternoon, and in a most amiable manner, interrogated me at length concerning Judaism, assuming a lively curiosity about it. I fell into the trap and exhibited my knowledge as a college boy who knows his text-book thoroughly. Informed by the teachings of Leon of Modena I answered all the questions fully; the ceremonies and customs observed today by the Jews being no longer a secret to me.

When he had elicited from me all that he desired to know, the Abbé changed his tone; his face darkened and he asked me quite naturally from whom I had received my information. It would have been easy to give the true explanation and even to show the little volume. But I reflected that if I showed the book it would be confiscated and I cared too much about it to be willing to lose it. I stammered some unlikely reply, making a pretext of some reading and conversations, and the priest saw clearly that I was not telling the truth. He grew more severe and declared that to be so well

informed I must have seen some rabbi, in which he was only half mistaken, adding that in his zeal for Judaism, this rabbi had no doubt sought to deflect me from Catholicism. It is clear that the good priest pictured rabbis in his own likeness. I agreed that they certainly would be animated by the most ardent spirit of proselytism, but at the same time protested that I had never known one. I was severely reproved for forgetting that the Jews had crucified our Lord. Then being on the defensive I replied that it seemed to me most unfair that this act should be imputed to those Jews I had seen, and at that moment, for the first time, the absurdity of an accusation which in other circumstances might not at all have shocked me, presented itself to my mind.

Abbé Neyret concluded that my Catholic faith was in peril and spoke of it to my mother, who seemed greatly alarmed. As yet my faith was in no way shaken, but to have aroused within me the possibility that it might be, sufficed to make me conscious of the change that had come over my conception of religious history. In his love for me, the worthy priest thought that he must do something to warn me of the danger which he foresaw. He thereupon decided on means, which as will be seen by what followed, came to have very different consequences from those he had hoped for.

V

THE ABBÉS LÉMANN

At this time there lived in Lyons twin brothers, Catholic priests of Jewish origin, the Abbés Joseph and Augustin Lémann. They had been converted after a grave illness that both had suffered while at the Lycee of Lyons, at about the age of eighteen years. The good sisters who had nursed them with devotion became interested in their souls and the Christian seed that their solicitude sowed fell upon well prepared ground. Barely restored to health, the brothers asked for baptism.

Orphans, they had been brought up by an uncle who apparently had occupied himself but little with their spiritual needs. Those who have done nothing to transmit a religious heritage to the young souls in their charge ought to be the last to be surprised by conversions, which under such conditions seem to me perfectly explicable and even justifiable. The uncle seemed none the less irritated by the decision of the young men, and the Quai des Celestines, where they resided, resounded more than once with sounds of the terrible scenes he made there. These violent

outbreaks did not cause the brothers to swerve from their determination. A few years later they entered the Seminary of St. Sulpice to consecrate themselves to the priesthood, and there it was that they learned Hebrew, though they remained mediocre Hebrew scholars.

There was a strange contradiction in the Lémanns. On the one hand, they were of an extraordinarily marked Jewish type, and it must be admitted far from the beauty of the oriental. Their originality of character, their gentle manners, their mutual attachment, which made even a momentary separation unbearable, condemned them to live alone. At first, appointed curates in a parish of Lyons, they were soon found to be unequal to an active ministry, and they were assigned to the post of chaplains in an institution of deaf-mutes. It was there in a suburb of the great city, in the vast and silent depth of this place, that the greater part of their lives was spent. There they lived in a sort of spiritual ghetto, having but little contact with their brothers of the Lyons clergy, who were not very sympathetic towards them. And these Israelites by birth, to whom the study of Hebrew had opened the treasures of the Scriptures, gave themselves up to all the frills of modern Catholic worship. The worship of the Holy Infancy, the Holy Face, of the Sacred Heart, of St.

Joseph, of the Rosary, of Lourdes, made up the essential elements of their piety.

Nevertheless, when they were heard in the Catholic pulpit, they assumed an attitude of ancient nobility. They were then distinguished and admired orators. They preached in various towns, with some measure of success, during Lent, and also on other occasions. In order to condemn the attacks of the Republic upon the rights of the church, they achieved the inspired accents of an Isaiah or of a Jeremiah. Their nervous, vibrant words, falling in majestic sentences, their picturesque style enhanced by biblical citations and memories, the strangeness of their physiognomies endowed them with the fascination of prophets. They loudly proclaimed that they were Israelites, descendants of Abraham, authentic representatives of the true people of God. How well I understood the impression they must have made later on poor Paul Loewengard! It was no doubt the first time this poet of ardent and unquiet soul came upon men who proudly called themselves Jews and who claimed to have dedicated their lives exclusively to the salvation of their people.

An apostolic desire had in fact not ceased to animate the Lémanns. We find a significant proof of it in the history of the *postulatum* which they presented in 1870 to the Council of the Vatican. Thus

is named a sort of written request by which the assembled council is entreated to examine some particular question. Their aim was to persuade the church to take a first step toward the Jewish people, a paternal invitation to the very unfortunate nation of Israel. "We have felt the strength and confidence to come to you," they said in their supplication to the Fathers of the Council, "to implore your well-known mercy in favor of a nation which is our own, that of the Israelites."

The postulatum, approved by Pius IX, was presented successively to 510 Fathers of the Council for their signatures. One can with difficulty envisage the innumerable circumlocutions which this implies, and the patience, the perseverance with which the two brothers labored to achieve it. Certain bishops showed themselves obstinate, and when the Lémanns spoke to one of them of the place which the Jews sought to occupy in the divine plan: "Forsooth," said the prelate, "I see you advancing! You already dream of replacing us." Mgr. Antonia Colli, bishop of Alexandria, who had made it a rule never to give his signature, remained immovable. At the end of the arguments, the two brothers threw themselves at his feet, saying, "Monseigneur, you cannot refuse to give your name in favor of the people who gave to you Jesus and Mary." The prelate was

moved. "True," said he, "I cannot refuse. I shall make an exception in favor of the Israelites."

Some of them accompanied their signatures by touching words which the zealous neophytes joyfully received. The last to sign was Mgr. Donnet, Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux: "I love the Israelites and they love me," he declared. "I will say voluntarily, as does my predecessor Mgr. de Cheverus, who was reproached because of his relation to the Jews, if we are not to meet some day in heaven, at least let me have the joy of meeting them on earth."

But the question of papal infallibility having absorbed the attention of the Council, the *postulatum* of the Abbés Lémann was relegated to another session. These details at least explain the sentiments which animated the two brothers, and the influence they were able to exert upon me in their own way when I entered into relations with them can be readily understood.

In fact, it was to Augustin Lémann that my professor, the Abbé Neyret thought wise to send me when he believed my Catholic faith in peril, in order to efface from my mind every trace of my very superficial contact with the synagogue. He wished me to accept him as my father confessor. The day I was introduced to him truly marked a new era

in my religious evolution, of which the first step had been so singular, and, though I was not conscious of it, so decisive. This Jew in cassock, *who told his rosary* and made his devotions to the Sacred Heart, was to continue against every effort and despite himself, by degrees slow but sure, the initiation that the Rabbi of Venice, Leon of Modena, had begun within me.

He received me with the greatest kindness. This man, whose altogether Hebrew type seemed so out of keeping with the ecclesiastical environment of Lyons, possessed to the highest degree that quality, eminently Jewish, *leb tob,* the good heart. He did not take seriously the fears expressed by my professor, for it did not seem possible to him that a young Catholic, piously brought up, could in any wise be attracted to the Synagogue. The good priest only saw the unlikelihood of such a supposition, and the possibility of making use of my ardor for religious studies serve the development of my Catholic faith.

It did not take me long to perceive that his knowledge of Judaism stopped at the destruction of the second Temple. He was all but ignorant of the interesting facts which Leon of Modena had imparted to me. All post-biblical history resolved itself for him in the unfortunate influence exercised by the

Talmud, in regard to which he professed a holy horror. It was quite evident that he himself had never navigated upon that vast sea; when he spoke of the dangerous rocks to be encountered there, he only quoted the unreliable testimony of Christian apologists. "Without the Talmud," he repeated—and this reflection contains an implicit statement which deserves to be remembered—"without the Talmud the Jews would all have been converted long ago."

One might as well say they would no longer continue to exist, and I did not fail to ask him how it came about that the Church, so respectful of the individual rites of diverse peoples, sought to confound the Israelites with the Latin multitude, in stripping them of every religious characteristic.

The objection could not but be embarrassing to a Jew who had remained so proud of the prerogatives of his race. "I doubt not," replied the Abbé Lémann, "the Mass will one day be said in Hebrew in Jerusalem, but today we have no choice, we must abandon the darkness of Jewish blindness for the great light of Rome."

What troubled me at first concerning Augustin Lémann were the religious practices which he recommended to me. From my mother I had inherited a serious, sensible piety, far removed from those in-

sipid devotions which have sprouted like parasitic plants from the old trunk of Catholicism. Above all I loved the services held with dignity, the beautiful liturgy, the plain song, the psalms. As a child, despite my adoration of Mary, I always felt a certain repugnance to saluting her fifty times in succession with the same words. In other days a taint of Jansenism would surely have been found in me and in my mother. All those forms of religion toward which my new father confessor was directing me, instead of attaching me more firmly to the church, as he hoped they would, began to awaken within me the spirit of criticism, since they impelled me to make the distinction between what I must practice and what I must in conscience reject. And when the spirit of criticism is once awakened in a Catholic it soon finds material for thought.

The Abbé Augustin Lémann was professor of Holy Scriptures and of Hebrew in the Catholic University of Lyons. He offered to admit me to his course, frequented by about twenty seminarists. I was enchanted by his proposal and the young layman distinguished himself from the first lessons in Hebrew reading, of which my neighbors could only painfully decipher the syllables. I articulated the *het* and the *ain* in a manner that astonished them.

We translated the "Songs of the Degrees" ***shire***

hamma'aloth, and I truly believe we never descended from these degrees; nevertheless the professor once interrupted this lesson, possibly entirely on my account. This was in order to translate the VIIth Chapter of Isaiah. We know that this chapter contains a verse on which the Catholic dogma of the virgin birth of the Messiah is founded: "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: behold the *alma* shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, God with us." Christians see in this passage a prophecy relative to the Virgin Mary, and that it may carry weight, construe it to show that the word *alma* signifies virgin and nothing else. The fact that there is, in Hebrew, another word, *betula,* having the same meaning, without possible contradiction, does not trouble them at all. M. Lémann studied five or six biblical passages successively with us where this word *alma* is used. Among these verses there is at least one which seems to furnish an absolutely contrary significance to that for which we were searching; I saw for the first time that theologians trouble themselves little about the evidence, where the equally glorious fact of the virginity of Mary is concerned. M. Lémann had patiently built a monument of subtleties on this question from the height of which he triumphed, smiling behind his glasses.

Aside from the fact that this type of exegesis seemed to me quite shocking, I was disconcerted in perceiving that the doctrinal edifice of the true church was bound up with a problem of this sort and rested in the main on so fragile a foundation; a doubtful interpretation of a Hebrew word. I was still more disturbed after reading the entire chapter. I discerned with the aid of the context that the matter with which the prophet evidently dealt was a contemporary event and not the Messianic epoch.

I then set myself to study other prophetic texts, most frequently brought to the support of Catholic dogma; the allusion to the scepter of Judah in the benediction of the dying Jacob, the prophecy of the seventy weeks in Daniel, the description of the Man of Sorrows in the LIIIrd chapter of Isaiah, the well known verses of the XXIInd Psalm, concerning which the Massoretes are accused of inaccuracy, finally the various passages quoted by the Evangelist St. Matthew with the words, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets." It was clear to me that the interpretation given to these different texts was arbitrary, forced and altogether conventional. Read in French they still seemed to me at times to have a vague Catholic turn, but in Hebrew they signified nothing at all, or at least something quite different.

The most immediate result of my study of exegesis was that I was led to recognize that the Jews were quite right not to embrace Christianity upon scriptural proofs so inconclusive. My Christian beliefs concerning the advent of the Messiah in the person of Jesus, predicted, I was told, in every detail, by all the Hebrew prophets, suffered a decisive blow from which they never recovered. This change took place without my having to undergo one of those conflicts which usually accompany the crisis of the soul. I had in no sense the feeling that I was losing my faith, but on the contrary that my faith was being purified and was coming closer to the religion which was historically that of Jesus. This was in effect the passing phase, which my Christianity took at that time, and M. Lémann, who always remembered his origin with pride, contributed unconsciously toward my evolution. He asked me to accompany him on the evening of December 8th, the day of the Immaculate Conception. Only Lyons could organize such a festival of lights in honor of a theological abstraction. The Basilica of Fourvière was dazzling with a thousand lights like a fairy fortress, and everywhere windows were illuminated in honor of the Virgin. The graceful curves of the two rivers were revealed in fairy-like beauty, and the merchants, the Israelites as well as the

others, made the play of colors serve as footlights of gas for their richest displays so that the profane curiosity of the crowds pressing through the streets might also be satisfied.

We traced our way with difficulty to an outlet beyond the Place Bellecour with its splendid façades, and succeeded in getting to the Quai Tilsitt on the left bank of the Saône, at the foot of Fourvière—the immobile synagogal front on this quay forming the only somber spot in the midst of the general illuminations. M. Lémann stopped to contemplate on the one side the dark mass of the synagogue, and on the other the hill where the basilica rose, amidst the Bengalese fires, like a magic apparition. "And to think," he murmured with his sacerdotal and solemn intonation, "to think that it is a Jewess that they celebrate in this way."

Why is it that important facts often escape one's memory without leaving a trace behind, while small details, seemingly insignificant, simple words spoken by chance, certain inflections of the voice, certain glances of the eyes, engrave themselves on one's mind never to be effaced? Therein lies one of the mysteries of that mysterious thing called memory. But the fact is that I still hear M. Lémann formulating that banal thought, while he contemplated the

wonderful display of lights in honor of the Immaculate Conception, with ecstatic gaze.

The fact of the Jewish origin of Christianity over which Christians do not generally linger, presented itself vividly to my mind, and at the same time the contrast between the somberness of the synagogue and the surrounding illuminations acquired for me a symbolic value. The Abbé Augustin Lémann did not cease to repeat to me, that Judaism is divine—but only up to the Talmud—that Judaism and Christianity are two phases, two steps in one and the same religion. These two forms do not succeed one another, but coexist and oppose one another, and there is a semblance of logic, in that the authentic representatives of the first are in the right when in conflict with those of the second on controversial points.

Soon this Jew who took such pains to identify the *alma* of Isaiah with the Virgin Mary of the Christians, and who remained so proud of the fact that she was a daughter of Israel, ended by giving me a feeling of disturbed equilibrium and harmony. Not because in the exercise of the right of conscience he had embraced the religion of his choice, but because belonging by race, by ancestral ties to a more ancient tradition, designed to govern the new and to correct its errors, he was by virtue of birth destined for other ends.

On the following Yom Kippur, I returned to the synagogue, this time with a *mahzor* or prayer ritual, which I had ordered from Paris.

VI

THE TEFILLIN

We are not always conscious of the changes that our thoughts and beliefs are undergoing. Much happens within us of which we have no knowledge, and there is need of some unforeseen and decisive occurrence to make us conscious of the changes that unawares have come over our inner world.

Those who seek in this narrative the proof of a sudden illumination which led a young Christian of the Catholic faith, such as was I, to accept the Jewish doctrine without reserve, will find nothing of the kind. There was in truth one hour in my life, and I shall tell of it later, when I felt myself truly and finally converted, but not by the act of passing from one religion to another. And this conversion only came to pass much later, after many conflicts, doubts, backslidings, after a long series of spiritual searchings which I cannot describe, so slow and imperceptible was it even to me.

No doubt examples of instantaneous conversions could be cited, which, in the twinkling of an eye, projected a human soul into a region of wholly new

peace and certitude. But even in these very exceptions, who can tell what were the hidden influences at work, that finally led to the shattering of the inner balance. Saul of Tarsus is thrown to earth on the road to Damascus, but in relating this extraordinary transformation, the writer does not enlighten us concerning the state of mind of the convert, from the day when as a mute witness to the stoning of Stephen, he held the garments of the martyr during his execution. For my part I believe that in every conversion which bears fruit of a moral quality, there is the direct intervention of God, but that does not shut out the progressive and often unconscious preparation which makes the passing to a new life possible. The realm of the Spirit has its laws as has the realm of nature. A religious metamorphosis is only mysterious to us because its deeper evolution escapes us.

My readers will then be mistaken if in seeing me return to the synagogue for the third time on Yom Kippur, they imagine that the Catholic faith of my youth was ended. Only confusedly understanding it, I was yet to become captive to the fascination exercised over me by the ancient religion of Israel with which my soul had come into contact, and M. Augustin Lémann continued to have in me not only

a pupil who did him honor, but a penitent, docile to his spiritual directions.

But I want to make a disclosure to my unknown readers and friends, and leave it to them to derive the lesson which may be drawn from it. In the attraction that Judaism had for me, I think I am able to indicate to them, if not the initial cause, at least the medium which made it enduring, and those changes which my religious faith was thereupon to undergo. This was the Hebrew language.

At that period of my life, the Jewish doctrine was still too little known to me to create a really profound conviction within me. What I had learned about it came to me solely thru the channel of the Old Testament, and here the influence of the Church which had taught it to me, in stamping upon the entire history of the Jewish people its figurative interpretation of the Messianic advent, imposed itself on my soul despite matters of detail of which I was critical. I could then believe that my religious curiosity once satisfied, my interest in the synagogue would have no serious consequences. I would become weary of taking part in services where the lack of decorum contrasted painfully with my childhood customs. Encouraged by my teachers, I would finally have entered the seminary for which I was destined from my youth, or if I had renounced the

priesthood, I would probably today be an attorney in some parish of Lyons, a more or less tepid Catholic like so many others, maintaining a respectful deference to the commands of the Church, and giving my voice at elections to the conservative candidate against the representative of advanced thought. But there was the Hebrew—the Hebrew exercised a fascination over me which decided everything.

Many others have known the indescribable charm that the language of the Bible holds. As I did, they have sensed the mystic perfume these venerable texts exhale, like the subtle aroma of dried flowers between the leaves of old books. Through the Hebrew syllables with their sonorous cadence, something of the soul of Israel reached me. A biblical passage or a shred of a prayer out of the ritual, which I succeeded in translating, spoke to me of Judaism in a more penetrating manner, and was more menacing to my faith than all the learned discourses of a convinced and informed Israelite with the best intentions in the world could have been. When I opened my psalter the words had a significance for me, an emotional and religious value that I could never again find in French or in Latin.

One day when at the synagogue, trying, not without difficulty, to find myself in my *mahzor,* my neighbor said to me brusquely, "You make a pre-

tence at reading, for you are not a Jew, that is clear." In reply and without taking umbrage at this discourteous observation, I read a line of my ritual to the ill-bred man, and translated it for him. He seemed much surprised. "It is certainly extraordinary, I would have wagered you were not a Jew. And you can translate! You know more about it than I do." I was inwardly flattered by this reply, and the thought that my knowledge of Hebrew rendered me in a certain sense more Jewish than my interlocutor, was singularly agreeable to me.

If Abbé Lèmann had been a psychologist, warned by his first experience of the influence that Hebrew could exercise over me, instead of making the study of it easy, he would have forbidden me access to his course in the Catholic University. In approving of my taste for Hebraic studies he was unconsciously controverting the goal he had in mind. On one occasion he even gave me the opportunity to make a sort of public profession of Judaism.

It happened thus. One morning, our professor brought a young Syrian to his lecture course, an Israelite by birth, converted and ordained by the Jesuits of Beyrout. To show him the progress his students had made, he asked each one of them to read or recite some verses in the Hebrew. When

my turn came I recited the first paragraph of the *Shema*. A little Jewish child could have done as much, but in the environment of Hebraizing seminarists this text was unknown, and it brought me congratulations from the master. The foreign visitor was probably the only one who was astonished by the choice I had made, and by the idea that had come to me to learn this passage by heart. As to M. Lémann, so great was his simplicity and his ignorance of the Jewish religion, that he only saw in this recitation a proof of my interest in sacred studies, so he praised me warmly and said to me at the close of the lesson, that, once a priest, I would make an excellent teacher of Hebrew. Thus it was that by a whole series of circumstances and fugitive but repeated impressions, Providence was leading me towards the path in which it had destined me to walk.

It was also the Hebrew that determined the decisive crisis of my religious evolution. I have spoken of the forms that clothed my youthful Catholic piety. It was only at the college that I became acquainted with certain devotional practices. My mother never compelled me to wear scapular nor medals. However, one day after having re-read, in my Leon of Modena, the description of the *Tefillin*, the desire came to me to make some-

thing of the kind for myself. With the greatest care I copied in beautiful square writing that same text of the *Shema* and enclosed it in little bags which I accustomed myself to wearing on my person. I knew not exactly how to explain to myself the meaning I attached to such an object of piety. Possibly it seemed to me that a custom which without doubt obtained in the primitive church of Jerusalem, ought be particularly venerated by a Hebraizing Christian. All the same the fact here recounted assumes an importance which in reality it did not have, and the result proves that I was not yet as detached from Christianity as such an act would suggest. It came about that my mother discovered my improvised phylacteries, and the suffering it caused her was the gleam which threw an unlooked for light upon my strange and complex state of mind.

When two years before this time Abbé Neyret had expressed his fears touching me to my mother, M. Lémann with his kindly optimism had promptly dissipated the concern which she felt, but the discovery of my *Tefillin* was a terrible blow to her. She believed not only that the fears of my professor were well-founded and that I had lost the faith, but that I had also been converted to Judaism. Her anguish was so great that she could not contain her-

self. She burst into tears, and the reproaches she made to me amidst her sobs evinced the utmost despair.

I was stirred to the depths of my being at the thought that I could cause such sorrow to my mother, and I do not think I ever suffered so much in all my life as at that moment. Great was my sorrow many years thereafter when my dearly loved mother had left me, after having made with wondrous resignation the renunciation of her life, preoccupied only by the desire to spare me the agony of last farewells. Great was my grief, though my own faith, which was in unity with hers, helped me to serenity, while the thought of having pained her through any fault of mine grieved me unutterably. There was nothing I was not ready to do to stop her tears. I threw myself into her arms. I swore to her that she was mistaken, that I was now, and would always remain a Catholic, that nothing would ever separate me from her, and that I would immediately destroy everything that seemed a menace in her eyes.

The deep distress that I manifested brought back calm to her spirit. She dried her tears, and with the strength of soul of Monica, Mother of Augustine, began to speak to me in the most logical way. "My child," said she, "thou art at the age when the faith

of young people usually undergoes a crisis, but thou wilt emerge victorious, if thou follow my advice. All that I ask of thee, is to continue to pray each day, to go with me to mass on Sunday, and to seek to acquire a more profound knowledge of Catholic doctrine. It were unpardonable in thee if thou wert not to do at least as much to preserve the Christian faith, as thou hast done in exposing thyself to the loss of it."

These words of my mother made a profound impression upon me. I understood all their wisdom, and it seemed to me at that moment that God Himself had made his will known to me. I promised to conform to all that was asked of me. My bags of *Tefillin* were burnt on the spot, but strangely enough my mother did not subject the little volume of Leon of Modena to the same fate, nor my book of Hebrew prayers, neither did she dream of exacting the promise from me not to return to the synagogue. I could not but see in this circumstance a new proof that all things were providentially arranged toward a predetermined end.

The Abbé Neyret, informed of what had happened, thoroughly approved of the stand taken by my mother. He placed in my hands the four volumes of the "Etudes philosophiques sur le Christianisme" by Auguste Nicolas, and he was convinced

that I would make a serious study of it. I was not forbidden to continue to frequent the course on the Holy Writings and Hebrew at the Catholic University, but as the spiritual leadership of M. Lémann did not seem to have yielded satisfactory results, the Abbé Neyret chose another confessor for me in the person of a Dominican father to whom he himself conducted me.

Father Henri presented the most striking contrast to my preceding mentor. His fine head ornamented by a crown of beautiful hair, cut according to the rule of Dominic, had that expression of majesty and gentleness which a deep inner life makes habitual. By his affectionate reception he immediately inspired confidence in me. It was not long before he demonstrated to me the truth of the Messianic prophecies. His course was altogether moral, and bore the stamp of suppleness which showed practice in dealing with souls. So that my Catholic faith might be re-affirmed, he left me free to study the Old and the New Testaments, and all those works that might facilitate intelligence concerning them, with the one condition that I tell him of the doubts which might come to me, and of the difficulties that I might encounter.

This manner of understanding my needs of the moment flattered my youthful vanity, and I set my-

self to study with ardor. Father Henri left an impression of serious piety and of consummate spiritual knowledge with me. I saw him every week with real pleasure, which had nothing of the sensation of strangeness that I felt in contact with M. Lémann, who was not at all surprised about the new arrangements, and never once asked me the reason for my choice of a new confessor. In this respect the Catholic enjoys the utmost liberty, and no one interferes in a matter which alone concerns his own conscience.

The guidance of Father Henri was most profitable to me, and yet it was this man of God who had the most sincere desire to initiate me into the splendors of the Catholic faith, it was this religious saint whose soul was all charity, who caused me to perceive one day, by a simple reply, the spirit of intolerance dominant in the church, the logical consequence of the system of doctrinal authority and infallibility. It is difficult for me to cite this word, for it throws a painful shadow upon a figure which remains in my memory aureoled with respect, but all fanaticisms, belonging to whatever school they may, must expiate the excesses they so often commit. I do not make of it a special attack upon the Church, but in general against the dangerous error, held in different degrees in other religious places,

that the truth can be served by the despotic abuse of power, by any tyranny whatsoever over conscience.

As I was talking with the Dominican of the command given by God to the Hebrews for the complete destruction of the Canaanites, according to the texts of Deuteronomy, I said to him that since the New Testament is animated by an entirely different spirit from the Old, since the God of love takes the place here of the God of vengeance, I found it difficult to understand why the Church at the period of the Inquisition had put so many Jews and heretics to torture. "Ah! my son," said Father Henri to me, his eyes raised to heaven with an accent of restrained fervor, "why were not more of them thrown to the flames?"

This word which escaped from the lips of the man of religion, and which no doubt expressed his ardent zeal for the purity of the faith, was to me a revelation of a state of mind that stupefied me. It was as though an abyss had opened before me. Could it be possible that true religion could comport with such sentiments? I instinctively felt that such intolerance could not be the expression of absolute truth, and my doubts of the divinity of the Church reawakened from that day.

It was not to be long before matters were pre-

cipitated by the entrance upon the scene of another personage who at about this time played an important part in my religious development.

In an humble habitation on the ground floor of the house in which I dwelt in Lyons, there lived a sort of philosopher of a strange winsomeness, a man of one book, the Bible, of which the verses always furnished appropriate occasions for his sententious discourse. Father Staehlin was a Swiss, of the Canton of Thurgovie, by profession a simple cobbler. Interested by the original ideas of this excellent man, I asked my mother to permit me to have him come up in the evenings to give me lessons in German. He corrected long translations which I submitted to him, and gave me exercises in conversation. When I learned that he was a Protestant, I incontinently undertook to convert him to Catholicism, and religion was the habitual theme of our conversations. But my Thurgovian was a redoubtable adversary, and his thorough knowledge of the Bible gave him a superiority over me which humiliated me. When I found myself embarrassed in order to reply to his denials, I changed the subject, secretly intending to find the explanations through Father Henri, and more than once the arguments of the Dominican helped me to refute the

attacks of Father Staehlin upon the dogmas of the Church.

These friendly controversies, in which I took a lively interest, were most useful to me, for in opposing one against the other, the two great Christian conceptions, that of Catholic Orthodoxy and the Reformation, altogether new to me since I knew nothing but what the book of Auguste Nicholas had taught me, their study contributed to make me realize the weak sides of Christianity. According to the word of the Evangelist himself, "Every house divided against itself shall not stand."

In the meantime, I inquired of the Christian philosopher, to which communion he belonged. He told me repeatedly that he belonged to the Universal church, but this confession of faith proudly set up against that of Catholicism did not satisfy my curiosity. The idea of an invisible church, mystically embracing all the true disciples of Jesus, was too foreign for me to be able to comprehend it as it was presented to me by the Protestant cobbler. I insisted on his making me acquainted with the church which he frequented, and he at once offered to conduct me thither. My mother, knowing that Father Henri was encouraging my efforts to convert Father Staehlin, permitted me to accompany him one evening to a meeting, which he told me, would

be particularly interesting. No doubt she believed that my Catholic faith would thereby become strengthened, and it would not be bad for me to know the dissenters at close range. This reasoning was that of an enlightened Catholic, whose beliefs concerning the divinity of the Church had never been disturbed. And they proved right, insofar as the Catholicism which I was finally to reach though it was not, to speak truly, that of Rome, was what her fine Christian heart foresaw across the ecclesiastical barriers that separate the faithful.

VII

THE CALL OF SALVATION

So ONE evening I went with Father Staehlin to the meeting of which he had spoken to me. It was in a sordid corner of the Guillotiere, the immense Lyons Faubourg, in the midst of a population that made one think of the quarters in London where Dickens placed the worst adventures of Oliver Twist. We entered into a low room furnished with benches which gradually filled up with a noisy crowd. Flags and placards bearing biblical verses decorated the walls, and the back of the room was occupied by a platform where there were men in red jersies, women wearing odd-looking hats, and others furnished with trumpets, tambourines and accordions, altogether forming the strangest spectacle, and to me the least religious that could be imagined.

It was a hall of the Salvation Army. Commander Booth, become through her marriage Commissioner Booth Clibborn, had established such centres of evangelical activity in various towns of France and this one of Lyons prospered at this time.

The meeting began; hymns, improvised prayers,

addresses succeeded each other in the usual way, and the entire scene upset my notions of the conditions required for a religious service to such a degree that I cannot describe my astonishment. I did find in this assemblage, a vague resemblance to the missions occasionally organized in Catholic parishes, where popular hymns likewise occupy an important place, but in these there is discipline, and one feels the power of a secular institution which may excite fervor, but which can always keep it within reasonable bounds. Here, on the contrary, everything seemed to me disorganized, and even the expressions used by these faithful enthusiasts were as new to me as their exuberant manifestations. The "Blood of Christ," particularly, of which they all spoke insistently, resounded to my ear like words of a strange language of which the sense escaped me. Yet, there was in this assembly so much enthusiasm, and despite some trifles of doubtful taste, everything breathed such evident sincerity and inward peace, that I felt myself won over little by little by the impression of a living faith which stood out in the scene.

The "testimonies" above all, interested me greatly. One by one the people on the platform arose, men, women, young people, all in turn made a sort of public and personal confession, telling the atten-

tive audience how they had become converted, not to a sect, they said, not to a religious creed, but to Christ Himself, who had "saved" them. All of them, in this recital of their own experiences sounded the same note, that of deliverance and of peace. One had been freed from the fear of death, which had oppressed him in the past, another from doubts which had tortured his mind; a third, who had been the plaything for long years of tyrannic passions, declared himself morally liberated, and armed with a power of resistance to evil which he had sought in vain in the past in his good resolutions; others finally, who had wandered through life without an aim, without an ideal, affirmed that they had discovered the "raison d'être" of their being, and the source of an inward and ever renewed joy.

All these testimonies were given in most homely speech, and it was their very simplicity that made them eloquent. Each one offered his individual experience not as a result of adherence to a new religion, but as the expression of the true Christian life, the principle of which was to be sought within the faith itself, and not in any ritualistic form whatever. The idea that all, no matter what the Church of their nativity might have been and without their having to abandon it in order to embrace another, might be able to attain the same spiritual

end, gave to those tales of conversion a strange significance and revealed to me an aspect of religion that I had not perceived up to that time.

The scene that presented itself at the close of this meeting was still more striking. The "officers" began to address the audience in vibrant appeals, imploring the sinners to return unto themselves, to give themselves to Jesus, and to make open confession of their will to change their way of life by coming forward to the "seat of the penitents." A number of persons responded to this pressing invitation, and while the new converts knelt at the foot of the platform they were immediately surrounded by Salvationists who exhorted them, while the faithful in uniforms scattered through the room in search of other souls to win to Christ. As though I feared to be in turn the object of these fervent solicitations, I expressed the wish to my companion to depart without waiting for the end of the meeting, and I left the room in an entirely different state of mind from that in which I had entered it.

I told my mother about the spectale in which I had had part, and persuaded her also, after much hesitation, to go and become acquainted with the Salvation Army. She came with me to a number of meetings and our Protestant philosopher might have triumphed at his leisure in seeing her follow

the hymns with me, in the little pamphlet which we had bought. Although she did not cease to make reservations concerning the purity of the doctrine preached in these assemblies, her spirit was too religious not to admire the accent of deep conviction which obtained amongst these soldiers of the Gospel.

It was at these Salvation meetings, that it was given to me to understand for the first time the contagion that a perfect faith can communicate. The incident is worth telling.

One day the room had been invaded by a mob of students and of curiosity seekers, more disposed to turn all things to ridicule than to listen to the speeches and the testimonies. The hymns followed one another, disturbed by howls and sneers, and when the officer presiding over the meeting attempted to speak, it was in vain that he asked for silence. The interruptions tumultously drowned his voice. A number of preachers, men and women, tried in turn to make themselves heard by the overexcited crowd; all their efforts were useless, and the tumult in the room increased to such a pitch that it seemed necessary to call in the police to reestablish order. I will never forget the scene that followed. Upon a signal from the president, an officer came forward to the centre of the platform. She was slight and pale and seemed the image of unarmed

feebleness facing insolent brutality. At first she did not speak, contenting herself by gazing at the assembly, with a serenity that soon commanded respect. Then she began to sing in a sweet sad voice, and the tumult ceased little by little, and soon the entire meeting hung upon her lips. That voice seemed to have come from a world of purity and of light, and offered the most striking contrast to the coarseness of the audience. She sang:

> Thy voice, O Jesus, is so sweet to my soul!
> I would hearken to it forever.....

But the miracle was, that the song having ended, she was able to deliver her message of penitence and reconciliation, in a most perfect silence. The crowd was conquered. An atmosphere of surprising calm had settled over the room. This woman who was speaking had, however, neither learning nor talent, and all her eloquence came solely from her profound faith and from her ardent desire to communicate something of her convictions to her hearers. But such an impression of spiritual power radiated from her entire being that the most frivolous were subdued.

These meetings of the Salvation Army added a wholly new conception to my religious experiences. By its very simplicity the Salvationist faith was a striking contrast to the majestic Catholic edifice

with its dogmas and its sacraments, and to Judaism with its multitudinous practices into which Leon of Modena had initiated me. The Salvationist faith was impressive through its simplicity. It was not a religion with changeless forms that I saw before me, but a life that drew its inspiration from immediate relation with the Eternal Power. It is true this life rested on a perfectly definite doctrine, and taking it all in all, of questionable basis, that of salvation through faith in the value of the death of Jesus. But the nature of this faith tempered the rigor of its form, it spelled renunciation of one's own will, the giving of one's heart and utter trust.

For an instant I believed I had found the supreme truth which constituted the fundamental idea of primitive Christianity, as it was preached in the fields of Galilee. Later, I realized that the idea of finding in these humble beginnings of Christian preaching a solid theological basis, completely falsifies the perspective of history. But aside from the doctrinal teachings, I have no doubt that I then grasped the essential element of the religious life.

And that which confers real value on this phase of my experience, despite its narrowness, and its errors, was that my spiritual growth reached at that moment the decisive point, when the soul passes, from the beliefs taught and passively accepted, to

personal religious convictions. A few weeks before I had flattered myself that I could convert Father Staehlin to Catholicism; in reality it was he who had converted me to Protestantism.

If one brushes aside opinions and less important doctrines, it is certainly in the individual conception of religion that the Protestant principle lies.

The impressions that I received at that time were so profound, that one day I found myself among the number of the converted, for whom the Salvationists gave thanks to heaven at each meeting. One evening in the absence of my mother, when the call to the sinners had resounded, I was among the number of those who approached the seat of the penitents. As in other acts of my religious life, it would be difficult for me to explain exactly what inner impulse I was obeying at that moment, but I know that I acted with all the seriousness and with all the piety of which I was capable. Salvationists surrounded me immediately to pray with me and to offer me their counsels. What did they say to me? I have no recollection of it whatever, but I had the feeling that I had taken a step of greatest moment. On returning home I told my mother what had happened. I told her that I felt an entirely new happiness, that I understood better than ever before the duty to serve God and the privilege of being able

to do so, with a mind liberated from all unquietness, and that in a word I had laid hold on the deep truth of the Christian religion. She saw how sincere I was, and did not reproach me but replied as she kissed me, that nothing could make her happier than to see her son take religion seriously, conjuring me, however, not to forget my Catholicism and to remain faithful to the promises I had made to it.

If Father Henri had happened in at that moment he certainly would have spoken to me in a different key, but, by a singular conjunction of circumstances, as though Providence had willed to leave the field free for the study of this new aspect of Christianity which had been revealed to me, it happened that my Dominican was obliged to leave Lyons for Poitiers, so that I found myself without a father-confessor. It was to M. Lémann that I turned anew for the Easter confession which followed upon my Salvationist conversion, but I took good care not to let him learn what had happened to me, knowing that he would not be able to understand. I limited myself to asking him one day, in passing, what he thought of the Salvation Army and I remember well, the reply he made to me: "They are," said he, "the false prophets to whom one can apply the word of Zachariah: 'Thou shalt not live, for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord.' "

"TEMPLE ISRAEL"

But I myself at that time was of the number of those "prophets of falsehood", for the Salvationists, making use of my good will, had not failed to enroll me in their ranks. I wore their uniform to the meetings and joined the brigades, which on Sunday went out to sell the paper "Onward!" On these occasions we reaped many insults and very few encouragements, but we were light of heart, filled with the sweet illusion of doing something useful for the salvation of the world. The thought of suffering for the Lord helped us to bear joyously the coarse jests with which the appearance of the Salvation military-caps were greeted at that time, and even now I think with a certain tenderness of that period of my youth, for a thing is dear to us when we have put much of ourselves into it, and a blessing is attached to every act of renunciation performed for the love of our fellowmen.

Nevertheless it is the great weakness of the Salvation Army that in order to keep those it wins to its doctrines, it is deprived of the resources which an organized church possesses. Founded on the principle of Anglo-Saxon revivals, by the most impressive means trying to produce conversions through vigorously inculcating the consciousness of sin, and the faith in a regenerating Power which can deliver us from it, it is incapable of maintaining

and developing the spiritual life among its adherents, though it caused the first seed to germinate within them. It is a fact that the majority of its converts go over to swell the ranks of other Christian communions. Its aim is essentially to wrest the sinner from the yoke of his passions, or from the culpable indifference regarding religion in which he lives, and then to make of him an instrument of salvation for others. It only retains within its ranks those converts whom it can finally turn into missionaries of salvation.

It follows then that it seeks to lead in that path those whose conversion seems to present serious guarantees of permanence. The "seat of the penitents" which they used as a spring-board to a new life is presented to them as the providential preparation for the "military school" where the future officers are trained, and they did not delay action in my case. The day come when the obligation to give to others what I had received, and to consecrate myself to the service of God in the Salvation Army was put before my conscience. In order to understand what came to pass, one must not lose sight of the fact that this exhortation was addressed to a young man, who early in life had dreamed of becoming a priest, and who had not orientated himself in the world outside of the religious life.

My readers will no doubt think we are far from our point of departure, I mean from that evening of the "Neila" where for the first time I saw Israel religiously alive. And yet, Hebrew had remained just as dear to me. M. Augustin Lémann had the habit of saying in jest, that in order to know it well one must forget it seven times, and take it up again seven times; but far from making use of this pleasantry in order to neglect my study, I made a rule for myself to consecrate some moments to it every day, and I continued to add a Hebrew psalm and some fragments of the ritual to my daily prayers. A point of contact had established itself in my thoughts between my first visit to the synagogue, and my unexpected meeting with the Salvation Army—the two experiences happened at an interval of three years, almost at the same date—and at the time that I publicly took my place among the converted Salvationists, I really found myself less distant from Judaism than one would be led to imagine, in considering only the facts themselves. This will be proven in the continuation of my narrative.

VIII

THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL

WHAT would have happened had I never known Christianity in any but the unique form of the religion of my birth? And even though Catholicism may justly be considered the most perfect in form, if later because of my distress over deviations, pagan in origin, by the side of purely Jewish elements which it preserved and developed, I embraced Judaism, it might with some show of reason be said, that my estrangement from Christianity was due to ignorance of its basic principles, of its essential ideas. In fact, interesting as the Catholic Church may be, it now only represents one-half of Christianity, and in Protestant communities Christianity continues to exist on principles which are not exactly those of Rome. A serious study of Christian doctrines must not overlook those conceptions of the faiths of the dissenters, and it was this study which my contact with the Salvation Army helped me to make in a more informing and complete fashion than I could have done through any amount of reading. In Catholicism the principle of ec-

clesiastical authority regulates the entire religious life of its followers, and tempers by its modifications and interpretations the letter of the Gospel, where it is too absolute or often incompatible with the needs of a human society that desires to live and to endure. Protestantism on the contrary acknowledges no other rule than the gospel word itself, and is obliged to extract therefrom its constituent principles, and to subordinate to them the entire Christian life; also, to conclude from its premises what the final development of Christianity is to be. In fact, the majority of creeds which claim to derive from the Reformation of the XVIth Century, do not conform to this fundamental principle, and do not succeed in entirely eliminating the ecclesiastical element, because of the need of adaptation and the play of historic laws which are stronger than logic itself. It is quite evident on the whole that the personality of Jesus who is the centre, the soul of the Christian faith, cannot be rediscovered, except through tradition, that is to say through the Church. Thus it is that despite all things and by an inevitable inconsistency, Protestantism has not been able to separate Jesus wholly from his historic background, and thus it still keeps in step with the organized Church instead of relinquishing its followers to the direct and personal influence of the sav-

ing Messiah. It could only continue to exist as a religion, because it retained doctrinal teachings and common practices which form the necessary outward bond of an organization.

It can then readily be conceived how great an interest the study of the Protestant principle presented to a Christian soul which tended toward the pure origins of its faith, and by a happy conjunction of circumstances I found myself in close relation with one of the most logical forms, and at the same time the most vital, of Protestantism, most liberated in any case from ecclesiastical organization, from theological teachings and from sacramental cults. Here the Christian soul found itself in the presence of the object of its faith, through suppression of all intermediaries. From this point of view the Salvation Army is certainly more Protestant than any Church of the Reformation. William Booth, its founder, a man of remarkable intelligence, has denied having intended to create a new sect. He has also taken good care not to impose any special belief on his followers, nor any sacrament, nor particular ceremony; baptism and even communion play no role in the religious life of his army. The work which he created, finding itself thus freed from every set form and from all dogmatism, could become the meeting ground of Christians of diverse

churches united in a common effort toward religious and social regeneration. This conception had something alluring for a Catholic such as I was, who was not asked to abandon his religious preferences, and also explains why the very pious soul of my mother could without disquiet, possibly even with a certain satisfaction, see me absorbed by a happy zeal for the Salvation Army at the moment when she had feared the occult and otherwise dangerous influence of Judaism upon me.

In truth, in the broad Salvation principle which permits the gathering of all Christians of every denomination, there is a lure, introduced in good faith no doubt, but which regains, as in every other case, that spirit of sect, the exclusion of which has been formally declared. The fundamental idea of Protestantism, individualism, only germinates there to blossom in an essential dogma. The soul, they say, comes into the immediate presence of Jesus, but how can this Jesus be known who cannot be seen, nor touched, and who no longer is, as in the church, a living force, acting through the medium of the hierarchy and the sacraments? Through the dogma which all the Protestant innovators since Luther have made the basis of their reform; the justification through faith in the efficacy of the suffering and the death of Christ, mystically substituted

for the sinner. The justification operates more effectively as faith in this doctrine becomes more vital, and thus individualism results in enlightenment, which has always been in Protestant countries at the heart of religious awakenings.

The justified soul, or, to employ the Salvation language, the soul saved from the damnation with which the Gospel threatens the sinners and even the unbelievers, for it says in clear tones, "he that believeth not is condemned," that soul in truth cannot live and be sanctified except through absolute obedience to the precepts of Jesus, its sovereign master. It may come to pass, it is even in the order of normal things, that this or that gospel word take on under the domination of this doctrine, so absolute and imperative a character that the possibility of remaining saved depends on absolute submission thereto. I shall never forget the day on which the Gospel was presented in this solemn way to my conscience. I had accompanied a superior officer passing through Lyons on a visit to a poor family of working people. Her burning zeal, her radiant mysticism, her complete detachment from the things of this world, preached more eloquently than her words. On her knees in an humble cottage, the Salvationist prayed aloud with rapturous fervor for the conversion of the family, who remained deaf to all entreaties. In

going away still animated by the zeal of her apostleship, she said to me: "See how souls are lost! Why do you hesitate to fly to their help? Yours is the duty; for this Christ has summoned you. Your place is in the Military School of the Salvation Army."

I replied that this was impossible, for my mother had only me in the world, and I could not think for a moment of separating myself from her in order to lead the life of a Salvation missionary.

The officer looked me squarely in the face and continued: Jesus said "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, if any man come to me and hate not his father or mother and wife or children and brethren and sisters he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God."

These words entered my soul like an arrow and destroyed in an instant all the peace that for some time had been my portion. Thus it inevitably happens when the soul is given over to its own inspiration without curb or discipline and without the salutary control of a sure tradition, of a wise direction. This simple citation of the Gospel assumed a supreme importance in my eyes and the very ex-

istence of my soul seemed to hang on the interpretation I was to give to it.

For many days I tried to wrestle with this problem, and the religious happiness I had tasted up to this time had come to an end. No more fervent prayers, no more calming and luminous certitude! Doubt had entered my soul and given rise to an unconquerable aridity and disgust. All divine realities were henceforth for me in the word that I had heard, and it seemed to me that in trying to escape its authority, I was revolting against God himself and closing against myself the doors of salvation forever. Reading the Gospel only increased my inward distress, for all its teachings became void before those verses to which the officer had given so direct and incisive a meaning: "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, but whosoever would lose it for my sake and the Gospel shall save it." Had there only been some special idea of the Salvation Army in question, foreign to the essence of the Gospel, it would not have been able even under the domination of a passing exaltation, thus to shake my moral balance. In order to produce this state of mind in me such an idea to the contrary would have had to draw its strength from primitive Christianity. And this is so in all the Christian denominations. The Catholic cloisters, the mis-

sionary homes, lost among pagan populations often so hostile, are filled with souls who once heard the irresistible call of the Master, bidding them to leave all and to follow him. And it was not without impunity that when merely a child I had read through the annals of Catholic Missions, initiating myself thus in this conception of the Kingdom of God to which one cannot have access except through absolute renunciation.

Having decided to do everything I could possibly do to regain my lost peace, I communicated to my mother the feelings which agitated me, and I added that the desire I had formerly felt to become a priest, could be realized more simply and more immediately, in giving my complete consecration to the Salvation Army. It can easily be imagined that my mother did not accept these overtures of mine without strong protestations. Nevertheless, the pain she manifested was nothing like the despair which I witnessed some months before, at the time of her discovery of the *Tefillin*. Her chief objection was that God apportions one's duties according to one's physical strength, and that my state of health did not permit me to undertake the adventurous life bound up with all the privations of the missionary Salvationist. She had our physician explain this to me more categorically; he, informed by her of my

plans, painted for me in sombrest colors the dangers to which I would expose myself. But in the religious mood in which I then was, what weight could a medical inhibition have in comparison with a Gospel commandment? My need of Christian immolation was only fortified thereby.

I explained to my mother that our priests, our religious men and women often found themselves faced by the same moral obligations, and must sacrifice their dearest affections to God. She was convinced of this, but replied that their lives could not be compared to those of the Salvationist officers, laudable without doubt, but imperfect, as is all spiritual activity dispensed outside of the true Church. Abbé Neyret, consulted by her, did not hesitate to tell her that she had been gravely imprudent in authorizing my frequenting the Salvation Army meetings, that I could not go any further without falling into formal and damnable heresy. In order to take me away from a dangerous environment, he suggested a few days of retreat at La Grande Chartreuse. This plan was attractive to me. It was the first journey I had taken alone, and I felt that in consecrating myself in entire isolation during a week to prayer and meditation I would be accomplishing something which would be of importance to me.

I may have regretted many of my thoughtless actions because of what followed, but it is with a quiet heart that I think of the confidence which caused me to look forward at that time to a solemn tête-a-tête with God, the light of which I had need.

IX

AT LA GRANDE CHARTREUSE

I MADE the journey from Voiron to La Grande Chartreuse on foot. This sudden plunge into the splendor of nature enchanted me, and I did not weary of admiring the beauty of the magnificent landscape which I beheld for the first time. In the middle of the road, I sat down beneath the trees, and taking out my Hebrew psalter read several pages aloud. It seemed to me that the old songs of Israel harmonized with the pure mountain air, the roaring of the torrent in the valley and the lovely light which reached me from the sky, filtering through the sombre foliage. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all." Without knowing it I then communed, above all human differences, with eternal religion in the understanding of those highly essential verities, not many to be sure, which alone give life to the soul.

Arrived at the monastery, I was assigned as residence, as are all travelers desiring to spend the night there, to a cold bare cell, with a couch built into the wall like a coffin in its funeral niche, and I

went down to the common refectory for the evening meal.

My neighbors at the table were Italian priests, who seemed to me to bring to this cloister the insouciance of joyous tourists rather than the serious contemplation in keeping with those in retreat. *"Ci vorrebe un poco di musica!"* said they. Music, my God! when we came to this place to seek the great silence, inspirer of high and noble thoughts. I did not enter into conversation with these jocose persons, and retired promptly to say my prayers in my little cell. On the prie-dieu lay a book, but this manual of spiritual exercises gave me the same impression of mediocrity as did the devotional practices once recommended by the good Abbé Lémann. I closed the book to take up my psalter, from which I had so often before drawn pure religious inspiration. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." God who reveals himself in nature as the mysterious and eternal power of life is also the source of light and of solace for the unquiet soul, and I was sure that he would cause me to feel His presence, and that during this retreat I might find a solution in conformity with His will.

In the night the brother who kept watch came to knock at my door a few minutes before the hour for Matins, and I went to the gallery open to strangers to join in the convent services. In the shadow of the choir, all perfumed with incense, where the perpetual light threw its solitary wavering gleam, the monks, one by one, took their places, their little lamps lighting up for moments their white silhouettes, then hiding themselves and leaving the chapel plunged in almost total darkness. The voices rose slowly and solemnly, rolling out in austere fashion the prayer of the liturgy of Saint Bruno. They were clothed in the Latin language, those same accents of confidence and of hope that the Hebrew psalms have given to our world of doubt and suffering. After the meagre exhortations of the little manual, placed at the disposal of those in retreat, the Church offered an astonishing contrast of banality and of sublime grandeur like humanity itself; it prayed with ancient Israel in the majestic rythm of the three nocturns, with their lessons, their responses, their short intervals of silence, which threw into an almost unreal distance the memory of the burning Salvationist chants in which my voice had part the night before. In that hour I felt that I was a son of the great and ancient

Church, and I was prepared with docility to accept its commands.

The next morning, after high mass, I had myself inscribed as one in retreat and the father confessor was assigned to me, to whom I was to address myself. I saw him for the first time in the afternoon of that day. He was an ascetic, very dignified and distant in manner, who had none of the penetrating grace of Father Henri. He limited himself to prescribing the religious exercises preparatory to my general confession, and I devoted myself to this during the two following days with scrupulous attention, taking part regularly in the chapel services of the day and evening, my only interruption being an hour's walk in the vast forest which surrounds the monastery.

The confession which I was to make would be a detailed account, and as exact as possible, of my life and the diverse religious phases through which I had passed up to the day when the agonizing question came before my conscience which was the determining motif of this retreat at La Chartreuse. I expected positive help for my soul from these confidences made to a minister of God, trained in the solitude of the cloister, far from all earthly cares. I was humble and confident as befits the true penitent, and a little disturbed only by the gravity of

the act to be carried out, and the perspective of the important consequences which must follow. The moment having come, on my knees before the monk, I began my detailed recital, and I might have continued it and finished it without any question whatever coming from the confessor, as is customary, to facilitate my task. Finally embarrassed by his silence, which seemed heavy with grave admonitions, I looked at the monk and perceived his calm and scrutinizing eyes fixed upon me. They betrayed neither surprise nor reproach. No particular feeling was expressed by this countenance congealed in the immobility of detachment from all things, but I felt with sudden acuteness,—I felt there was no soul there bending over my own to give salutary counsel, but a cold lucid intelligence, which was judging me by rules of ordinary common sense, and that would not discover in all my history, aught but a succession of disconcerting contradictions and incoherent religious vacillations.

I am quite aware that even today many of my readers will find it difficult to follow me; they can no doubt with difficulty lay hold upon the thread that guides the events of my life. How then could this monk of La Chartreuse discover beneath the strange events of my confession the true warp and woof of the inner drama that I was unfolding to him? To

do that he would have had to be able to rise above distinctive dogmas and ecclesiastical divisions, to the pure region of absolute religion, that my soul, more Catholic, in a sense, than his own, already perceived. For he was the representative of a rigid system, sublimated by the discipline of the cloister, which did not permit him to admit, nor even to conceive of any possible reconciliation with what to him seemed error.

The impression made upon me by the synagogue and the Judaism of Leon of Modena, my ideas concerning the Catholic priesthood, my relations to the Salvation Army, and the thought of taking my place among its missionaries, all this seemed so inexplicable to him, that he no doubt found therein the indication of an unbalanced mind. He arose and said to me: "You came to seek counsel, I give it to you. You are not in the proper frame of mind to gain anything by remaining in retreat in this house." And then, as if he feared that my prolonged presence in the monastery might cause trouble, he added: "There is a train to Grenoble presently, leave without delay, that is the best course for you to pursue."

Thus the monk sent me away, and I cannot for a moment think of blaming him for the lack of understanding which he manifested toward an utterly

sincere young penitent who had laid bare his soul to him. During some moments he had me morally in his power, he could have done with me as he would, and at that time have definitely led me back to the seminary. He did nothing, because cold reason in him left no place for the understanding heart. Indeed he did exactly the reverse of that which those who sent me to him might have expected of him. He flung me back to the influence of the solemn warning given me by the Salvationist officer: "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, . . . he cannot be my disciple."

Since the church of my birth that I had come to consult with wholly filial submission, had no new interpretation of the word of the Gospel to give me, I would obey my first impulse. The light that I sought to guide me in my incertitude had been granted me by the very silence of the monk. Despite the latter's recommendation, I prolonged my sojourn by several hours at La Chartreuse. I departed on the following morning, resolved to sign my request for admittance to the military school of the Salvation Army.

Upon my return to Lyons my mother heard my decision with as much surprise as sorrow, unable to understand how the retreat at La Chartreuse had

produced a result so unlooked for in me. I was not of age. She might, using her authority, have opposed the carrying out of my plans. She did nothing of the kind, and I admire the wisdom of her conduct. In the apparent calm with which she occupied herself in the preparations for my departure, although her heart was torn, as was mine, at the thought of the coming separation, there was perhaps the implicit certainty, that this new experience would be of short duration and would finally tend toward the good of my soul. She was not mistaken.

X

CHRIST WITHOUT A CHURCH

I LEFT for Paris with several officers and future pupils, and installed in the School of the Quai Valmy, found myself thrown into an unquiet existence which in no way resembled the preparation for the missionary life of which I had dreamed. What a striking contrast to the calm of the isolated cloister in the depths of the forest—this religious fever, these burning prayers, these disordered songs in the midst of which I was flung in the tumult of Paris. Small domestic tasks were assigned to me, which would have seemed repulsive had it not been for my Catholic discipline, which helped me to accept the most humble duties. Nevertheless, in order to keep up my courage and to compensate myself for the pain I felt at being separated from my mother, under conditions that were a cause of deep distress to her, I was in need of a deeply spiritual life, furthered by a wise understanding that might fortify my mood. But in the Salvationist environment, all this was lacking.

Outside the frame-work of the meeting to which

I was accustomed, the improvised prayers seemed to me hasty and conventional. The speeches of the leaders to the student-officers usually showed nothing more than a factitious exaltation, poorly disguising complete ignorance regarding religious matters, and a sort of contempt for all intellectual as well as theological culture. Above all, I was amazed to see that no pains were taken to avoid indication that all Christian Churches were blameworthy, all their ceremonies vain shows, and that the Salvation Army alone possessed the pure Gospel and could alone effectively work for the salvation of the world. I soon experienced a painful sense of being out of place, and asked myself if my ideal of consecration to the service of God, without the restriction of a denomination, did not rest on an illusion in this environment.

It was during these days at the Military School that I found myself face to face with the Protestant principle and I very soon discovered its inconsistencies. If God, in order to redeem sinful humanity, was obliged to incarnate himself in the person of Jesus, is it thinkable that his short stay on this earth could only culminate in the formation of an invisible company, of an altogether ideal church, without body and without social organization? The condition of the world having need of the work of

salvation for the great event of Redemption, can one conceive that God would have taken no precaution to preserve the doctrine which was to prove its value, and that he would undeliberately have turned it over to the countless contradictions of rival sects? All the dissenting faiths agree on one point, the only one on which there is unanimity amongst them; it is condemnation of the Church of Rome, as constituting a development of Christianity contrary to its pure essence. But does not this point of view at the same time establish the illogical character of a doctrine which proclaims as divine a revelation vitiated in its very germ, since the historic evolution of this germ, hierarchic, dogmatic, cultural would culminate in a mass of errors? Would it not be more reasonable to think that the source of error must be sought higher up, to know in fact that this revelation was opposed to another revelation, more ancient, and yet recognized with singular irrelevancy as its first, its indispensable foundation?

Another doubt arose in my mind as to what exactly was the unique pivotal point of all the Salvationist activities. It happened that at a meeting of pupil-officers, Commissioner Clibborn took as her text one day this verse of the Gospel: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name,

there am I in the midst of them." She spoke to us with rare power of the presence of Jesus, of which Christians in general, she said, did not feel all the divine reality. Nevertheless, he is here at this very moment, this Jesus who preached to the crowd of Galilee. Those eyes so gentle, that penetrated to the depth of the souls of the fishermen, are fixed upon us. That heart which so loved men, is ever aflame with love for us; those hands which rested in blessing on the heads of little children, are outstretched towards us; those feet that were nailed to the wood of Calvary have come to meet us. And as in the past he received the adoration of the blind, he expects that we in turn shall worship him with the same faith." Throwing herself on her knees, with these words, she addressed to Jesus, present though invisible, the most fervent prayer. I had very often heard all these thoughts expressed, I had many times joined in similar prayers, and yet on this particular day I was struck by the strangeness of these ideas. How could this Jesus of Nazareth, whose historic figure was thus invoked in gripping fashion, be everywhere at the same time? The Catholic Church does not believe in the real presence except in the sacrament at the altar. The mystery thus envelops itself in a material symbol, and it

is only as the second hypothesis of the divine Trinity that the Son of God is adored, present everywhere.

But how explain this supposed omnipresence of the person of Jesus, materialized by the Protestant faith? Was I not the dupe of a word, of a formula? And this word, this formula, did they conceal something of reality? It was nevertheless only the certainty of this reality which could justify obedience to words spoken two thousand years ago, and which without it are no more than an empty echo without any legitimate authority over our consciences. "He who loves his father or his mother more than me is not worthy of me." By what right exact such sacrifices, such reversal of the holiest sentiments of nature, when one has disappeared, a fugitive image, lost in the mists of a far-distant past, and resuscitated only in the imagination of naive worshippers? From that time my uneasiness at each meeting grew stronger, and it became evident to me that I was not in harmony with the beliefs professed all about me.

Again it was my Hebrew psalter that fortified me in this increasing perplexity. Therein I discovered words attesting the belief in a divine presence, which had not waited for the coming of Jesus to manifest itself. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire

besides Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Was not this the faith of Jesus, and why should it not still be our faith today? A chance circumstance helped to enlighten me on my religious status, and it was again from the Church of my birth that the decisive impression came. On a certain Sunday in June, with a group of Salvationists, I passed by the Church of the Madeleine, its façade decorated, with hangings on the outer doors for the *Fête-Dieu.* The crowd pressed against the edges of the building, and without stopping, we hastened our steps towards I know not which meeting of the Faubourg. At that moment I had the very definite sensation that I was no longer with the believing crowd, that I belonged to a small sect, and my Catholic instinct revolted. That very evening I announced to the leaders that I had come to them in good faith, but had reached the conviction that I was not in the place destined for me by God. No effort was made to detain me, and one of the superior officers limited himself to declaring with an air of pity, that from the first he had had doubts as to my vocation. The following day I telegraphed to my mother to announce my return, happy in the joy that this news would bring to her. My retreat at La Grande Chartreuse only lasted four days, but

nonetheless it marked an important step in my religious development. The weeks passed at the Military School of the Salvation Army at Paris were also but a swiftly passing episode in my life as a youth, but such notable changes were taking place within me, that this story would be incomplete if I had not made a place for them in my telling of it.

XI

THE DOMINICAN CHAPEL

One can readily imagine in what a state of mind I returned to Lyons after this swift and exciting adventure. I was like a man who had just escaped from a great peril, and who therefore appreciates more fully the charm of life. Never did the presence of my dear mother seem more sweet to me; never did I feel happier in our modest dwelling, so serene and filled with the most precious joys of this world. Our days passed like a river of pure waters, flowing without break between its banks. In our home, religion had the place of honor, but without any affectation. It was neither somber nor spasmodic, and thus very different from the feverish piety of the Salvationists whom I had seen ostentatiously kneeling and loudly praying on the sidewalk of the Lyons station. It is quite comprehensible that on the day following these experiences I had the feeling of restored balance and that the Church of my birth, with its majestic secular traditions, with the intelligent regulations of its religious life, so perfectly adapted to various degrees of

spiritual culture, had regained at one stroke all its prestige in my sight.

The Abbé Neyret, eager to oppose the breadth of Catholic discipline to the tyrannical demands of Protestant illuminism, thought it wise to demand of me only what was absolutely necessary in matters of religious practices. He said to my mother, that providing I be faithful to the Sunday mass, I could be exempted from everything else. But the vesper service which we habitually attended in our Primatial church was precisely what I cared most about, because the singing of the psalms had a special attraction for me. The plain chant was rendered with such perfection in the Lyons Cathedral, the liturgy unrolled itself there in so impressive a manner that I took utmost pleasure in these Sunday afternoon services. When in the quiet of the vast aisles, the pure voices of children in crystalline notes sang the last responses of the Complines, the *In Manus tuas, Domine,* the words reechoed in my soul with such power and such serenity that I was astonished myself that I could have sung the praises of God to the sound of tambourines and cymbals, in incoherent and noisy meetings, and I once again found the atmosphere of peace in which my early youth had developed.

I can only speak with respect and with affection

of the Church of my birth. God keep me from forgetting what was my initiation into the religious life, and that it formed the beautiful soul of my mother, whose lofty piety spread the most blessed influence over my entire existence. I know of nothing more painful than the acridity with which certain Catholics who have become Protestants, express themselves on the subject of the Roman Church. To hear them one would say that their present worth can only be built upon their former worthlessness, and they know not how to affirm their Evangelical orthodoxy without making a show of ingratitude. There is undeniable injustice and consequently a false principle in such arrogance. In reality, they only oppose one government against another, and one might say that they set their wits to work to prove that the new is as false as the old, without having its august and logical ordinances. The truth in human institutions,—and all religious societies are in large measure human, knows not these clear-cut categories; it is always relative and conditional. As to myself, I was indeed in a position to judge the imperfections and the weaknesses of the Catholic system, but this did not blind me to its beauty and its grandeur.

How could I fail to mention in this connection that the master, whose acquaintance I was to make

some months later, and who was to play a decisive role in my religious evolution, often repeated to me, that, in his opinion, Christianity, and particularly the great Latin Church, that he knew better than any other, corrected and reformed in certain essential points, and taken back to its primitive sources, would be likely to remain the religion of the Gentile people? I would that my Catholic brothers who read these lines may know that the deference and recognition that they witness on my part are in reality homage to Judaism, which through the life of one of its most illustrious rabbis was inculcated within me. May they then rid themselves of their prejudices and recognize the true spirit with which the ancient synagogue of Israel is animated in regard to the great educative religions of humanity.

I am moreover more at ease in speaking thus of Catholicism, to which my Salvation Army digression had sent me back, now that I have come to the solemn hour which marked my definite conversion; and it was in the bosom of the Catholic Church that this hour struck for me.

I hesitated a long time before writing the following pages, for I am conscious of my inability to make clear to my readers the intimate sequences which made precious truths stand out clearly before my own eyes. There are regions of the soul where

mysterious powers enter into play, and nothing is more difficult than to make this clear to those who have never experienced anything of the kind. My duty, however, is to continue this recital with sincerity, omitting nothing that is essential, since the aim I have set myself in writing, is not to satisfy a vain curiosity. My wish is to come to the aid of those souls taken captive by truth, and bring to them my own witness, if God will to aid my imperfections.

Catholic discipline does not permit any one of its followers to remain in vacuo concerning his beliefs, or his moral life. The edification that I found in the solemn services of our cathedral did not prove to the Church that I was one of its submissive sons. The day must necessarily come on which I was to take the sacraments. Since my return to Paris Abbé Neyret as well as my mother had observed the most prudent reserve in this regard. But months passed by, and Lent having come to a close, the rigorous duty of the Easter communion made it impossible to delay any longer.

It was just at this time, and by another providential coincidence, that Father Henri returned from Poitiers, and an affectionate letter from him announced to me one day that he had come back to the Monastery of la rue Bugeaud. I hastened to go

to him, and he received me with his usual kindness, interesting himself keenly in everything I told him of my religious wanderings, which had occurred during his absence. "My dear child," he said to me, "It is impossible not to see the hand of God in everything that has happened to you. This it is that has led you, step by step, to this day. God has certain plans for you which are manifest in the working out of all these events, and you must respond to such grace, by a great surrender of your heart and by a firm will to serve God, even if you are called to remain of the world, of which I am not sure."

Thus he spoke to me, and I was struck by the allusion to the possibility of a religious vocation. His words expressed, in any case, a truth become more evident to me each day. "There is not a man," said Bourdaloue, "who reviews the years of his life, and who recalls the memories of all that has happened to him, but must pause at certain periods. These are the junctures where he found himself in perils from which he escaped, events happy or unhappy, strangely, extraordinarily astonishing, and which are so many signs of a visible Providence." These visible signs of a higher will came to me throughout my life without the shadow of a doubt, and my most ardent desire is to be able to bring

home to others this fact, to move them at least to seek in their own lives those signs of a higher power which they will unmistakably find there.

It was in the course of my conversations with the Dominican Father that, in the simplest and at the same time in the most helpful way, my general confession was made, which was laboriously prepared at La Chartreuse, and which, contrary to all expectations, had so disconcerting a result. Possibly my adherence to the Salvation Army made mine a case reserved for the penitentiary priest and my father-confessor was obliged to ask for special authority in order to save me from excommunication. At any rate, my communion was put off until after the Easter period. I prepared myself for it with as much care and conscientiousness as though it were the first time that I was to accomplish this act. At last the day came and I shall not forget it in all my life.

It was on a Sunday of spring. On that morning I went to the Dominican Chapel. It was not open to the public at that time, and I found myself quite alone with the server in the right aisle, a few steps from the altar, where Father Henri was officiating with the unction which he put into all his religious offices. I was on my knees, without any book whatever, desiring to be in unison with the rites and

prayers. As the moment of communion approached, I tried to redouble my fervor, and the moment having come, I went to kneel to receive the sacrament on the very steps of the altar, after which I returned to my place, and my head bowed in my hands lost myself in deepest thanksgiving prayers.

And then I became irresistibly impelled to analyze my thoughts, my feelings. Forces had been at work within me, during the preceding years, in large part without my being conscious of it. I had not taken hold upon the intangible threads of that veil which hid my own state of mind from me. And here suddenly this veil was torn: Do you believe in the real Presence, in the Sacrament, as the Church teaches it to you? I asked myself, and with implacable clearness I was forced to answer: No, I do not believe it. Do you believe in the incarnation, in the divinity of Christ? No, I no longer believe it. I had at that moment a feeling of absolute emptiness. I felt with a sudden and amazing clarity that nothing of my Christian faith remained. I was awestruck as a man who looks into a gaping gulf.

Jouffroy, in his confession, has related in a touching manner the revolution which took place within him, and the results of which were finally revealed to him. I repeat his words, for they will help to

make intelligible something of that which was passing within me. "This sad change did not take place in the full light of my conscience; too many scruples, too many keen and holy affections would have rendered it impossible for me to have acknowledged its progress to myself. It was consummated insensibly by an involuntary action in which I was not an accomplice. For a long time I had not been a Christian, but in the innocence of my intentions I would have shuddered at suspecting it or thought it a calumny against myself to speak of it. . . . . In vain did I cling to the old beliefs as a shipwrecked mariner to the debris of his boat, in vain frightened by the unknown void in which I was to float. I threw myself for the last time with these, my old beliefs, towards my infancy, my family, my country, towards everything that was dear and sacred to me; the unyielding current of my thoughts was stronger; relations, family, memories, beliefs,—it compelled me to leave them all; the introspection continued more obstinately, and more severely, in proportion to the rapidity toward which it was nearing its end, and it did not cease until it was attained." That which Jouffroy experienced on that December night, in his solitary chamber, I experienced in my turn, that morning of Communion in the silent chapel bathed in the light of May.

In my case also the total collapse of my Christian faith did not come to pass consciously, but certain forces had acted within me, in a sense predetermined, which slowly sapped the foundations of my theological beliefs, the debris of which lay scattered about me. And now the result of this travail, dim to my understanding, was clear to my eyes, and it was not possible to be lured from it again.

But the outcome of this revelation was quite different for me than for Jouffroy. It is easier for me to retrace the phases of my self-scrutiny than to describe the moments that followed. It would certainly demand less time than I need to relate it clearly, but at the exact moment when I realized that I was no longer a Christian, in the theological sense of the word, I felt, in an unforgettable way, that everything was still left to me. Yes, everything that was of the eternally true on this side of shadows and appearances, symbols and images; God himself, the living and supreme Reality, unique and ineffable. It was no longer a question of an article of abstract faith, affirmed by my intelligence; it was a perception of God, an infinitely more simple and pure feeling of his presence and of his love filling my soul to the depth, with such power that the eternal truth of religion was at that

moment the evidence itself. I felt God truly with my soul, as one feels air with one's body.

Very often in recalling that spring morning, I understood the celebrated exclamation of Pascal: "Certitude! Certitude! Sentiment! Vision! Joy! Peace!" Yes, there is a certitude against which the assaults of doubt, the negations of incredulity dash themselves in vain like waves against a rock. Perish all the myths and dogmas! God remains to thee and with Him thou hast *ALL*. Thou art his creature and his child and nothing in the world can ever take thee out of his hands. Here is the truth, and is there a more Catholic truth in the real sense of the word than that which filled my soul, filled it with the same joy, with the same peace that Pascal experienced and which is the portion of the believers of all churches, of all faiths, of all rites since the day when the Patriarch Abraham, the father of them all, according to the word of Scripture, set out full of confidence for the promised land? Since then I have read many works, studied many doctrines, visited many religious men of all churches, prayed in different places of worship, but all my outward experiences have added nothing essential to the revelation which came to me on that day and the benediction which, at this moment of my writing, is still my most precious possession.

I use the word revelation for want of another that could better express, without any possible misunderstanding, that which took place within me, but I do not maintain that there is any parity between this and what traditional religion, harking back to its origin, implies under this term. Such experiences once felt, permit us at least to perceive the fulness of light that came to those inspired men whose words remain for us sure and precious guides despite the passing of the ages.

But one question will not fail to present itself to the mind of many of my readers. Is it possible that the personality of Jesus played no rôle, that it could completely disappear from the field of inward vision in such a religious experience coming to a Catholic while at the foot of the holy altar, and while he was performing in the required way the most sacred act of his religion?

I must reply here with utmost frankness, that the figure of Jesus was not absent during this solemn meeting with the one and never ending truth, but I felt at that time much more vividly than it is possible for me to express, that the faith of Jesus, as far as it is possible for us to know it, must have been like my own, more perfect, more profound, more luminous, if you will, but exactly of the same nature. When he cried out, My Father! he put

into that word, what it was given me in turn to put into it, but his personality itself, so imperfectly known to us, was no longer a vital and indispensable thing in my religious life. Even to the contrary, if there enters into his religion an element foreign to me, my soul turns from it as from something strange and hostile, and I would rather die a thousand deaths than to suffer it to become a part of me.

When I left the chapel of the Dominicans on that morning of communion I was no longer a Christian in the historic sense of the word, but was I less or more religious than when I entered there? What I know well is that I had left the period of infancy behind me, to attain my spiritual majority. I was so wholly freed from all tutelage, to the joy of the new attitude that had been vouchsafed to me, that I did not feel at this time the need of telling any one what had happened within me. I did not speak of it to my mother nor to my father-confessor. I said to myself that both in their own way were nearer to God than was I, but nevertheless they could not understand me. I had the clear conviction that I had arrived at the climax of a slow evolution, and all things henceforth seemed new to me. Thus the traveller who has climbed the steep slope of a mountain discovers when arrived at its summit, the panorama which extends on the other side. Such im-

pressions cannot be described. It were presumptuous to attempt it, but if my experience can bring but a little light to a single soul, I would be culpable in remaining silent.

Far be it from my thoughts to lead anyone to a new religious faith, on condition that he first abandon that other religion which was his. I repeat that my aim is only to bear witness by my own story to the divine reality of religious possibilities in all forms of religion that are clothed in the garments of sincerity.

But to define and fortify this conviction at the time to which this present narrative carries me back, I still had need of light, which was given to me at the right time, and which explains that the chief event related in this chapter does not yet end my story.

XII

THE JEWISH FAMILY

If today I pass in review the various phases of my religious evolution up to the important event, which I have just recounted, I must recognize that this entire development came to pass contrary to the dogmas, or rather contrary to the central dogma of historic Christianity. My soul instinctively repelled the idea that the last word had been spoken once for all, that at a fixed moment, in a certain time and space absolute perfection had been realized, in such a way that humanity had only henceforth to look to the past, while painfully walking in the footsteps of its far distant model. It was not against the forms and the sacraments in themselves, that I rebelled, for I always understood and loved their language: it was against materializing the divine by an exclusive and definite system. If the communion had been presented to me as the gift of God adapted to our real possibilities, and depositing the germ of future potentiality in the bosom of humanity, of which no church, no symbol, no theology, could express the glorious realities, I do not think I would

ever have passed through the crisis described in the preceding chapter; a benediction would have been given me without any inner anguish. But the incarnation of God in a Messiah and of this Messiah in a palpable form and henceforth changeless, that is what repelled my soul, under the unconscious influence of the prophetic thoughts of Israel.

If I had the impression, at this time, that I retained nothing of my Christianity, it was because I only saw it in its successive ecclesiastical embodiments, of which the Roman Catholic system seemed to me the most logical and the most complete. I would not be so positive now, for it does not seem to me that the religious experience that I had passed through on this communion morning was foreign to the true spirit of the Gospel. There is, in fact, in the Gospel a word that expresses with divine simplicity the result of my experience. It is the reply of Jesus to the question of the High Priest: "Art thou the son of God?" "Thou hast said." This word had originally a meaning other than that which it had for the pious Onias who, at the moment he was about to intercede for his brothers, spoke of himself as *the son of the house.* It is the synthesis of all prophetic instruction, and conveys so much better than do all the dogmatic teachings the passing of the human soul from the in-

tellectual or purely moral state, to the spiritual or mystical, that is to say to the inmost feeling of divine sonship.

That the sense of the Fatherhood of God, with the light and the spiritual power which it communicates to the human soul, embodies the pure religion of the Gospel is debatable. But that it is expressed on every page of the Gospel, making allowance for those passages which are sadly out of tune with this doctrine, is quite evident. One cannot find any lack of continuity between the Hebrew Bible and the Gospel.

Having come to this point in my religious evolution, I found myself at the same time far distant from the historic development of Christianity, but very near to its primitive conception, and in full accord in any case with the fundamental doctrines of Judaism of which it is the outcome.

This I felt immediately and most keenly. I said to myself that I was no longer a Christian in the proper sense of the word, but a Jew, probably as Jesus had been a Jew. As a result of my early education I felt the need of expressing my religious life through definite forms, and the thought came to me, more clearly than before, to undergo a complete conversion to Judaism, with which my soul found itself henceforth in full accord.

From the moment that I conceived this project it seemed right that I should tell it to the official representative of Judaism of my native town and ask his counsel. Nevertheless I did not. I passed again and again on the Quai Tilsitt, before the synagogue where the Chief Rabbi lived, without ever deciding to pay him the visit that my situation called for. Perhaps the thought of the fresh difficulties that I would encounter on the part of my mother, the sad scene which I could foresee, impelled me to put off the moment of decisive explanations, but I ought also say that another feeling restrained me, the vague fear of disappointment.

Later, I had the most affectionate relations with the lamented Chief Rabbi Alfred Levy, and came to have a veritable worship for the memory of this worthy pastor, who was goodness itself, and who would surely have received me at that time with his customary kindness. Alfred Levy was an eloquent preacher, one of the most agreeable to listen to, and nevertheless his sermons did not please me. It was at the time when the orators of the Jewish pulpit believed themselves obliged to sound the note of patriotism in every discourse. This may have been pleasant to their usual hearers, but to my ears it sounded strange. All the sermons that I had heard at the synagogue of Lyons on the great

holidays were certainly superior in matter and in form to many of those I had listened to in the church, and yet something was lacking in them. The moral common-places they elegantly developed minimized the Jewish religion in my eyes. When the *Chazan* sang forth the Hebrew melodies with his beautiful voice, I again found the soul of Israel, and even without perfectly understanding I communed with it, but when the rabbi spoke, and in most excellent French, I was carried back to the banalities of a religion with neither originality nor depth.

This impression, the gifts of M. Alfred Levy could not lessen, and I am not the only one to have felt it. Christians who occasionally visited the Jewish temple, have expressed themselves to me more than once in the same way. The Jewish ceremonial has eloquence for them, but the effort at verbal translation has none of it, and I understand the deeper lying reasons of the Orthodox of other days against the introduction of preaching in the common tongue. In synagogue worship it seems like an hors-d'oeuvre and is a concession of doubtful value to the customs of other cults.

However that may be, I did not visit the Chief Rabbi of Lyons as I had for a moment thought of doing, and toward the end of the month of August

of this same year, I left on a vacation and went directly to Nice, where as a young boy I had been taken after a grave illness. It was there that I was to come in contact with Judaism, or to speak more exactly, with Israelites.

At that time, Nice still possessed two synagogues the one official, or Concordate, the other independent. The latter situated on the rue du Palais was called the Reform Israelite Temple. The foundation of this second synagogue did not have its origin in theological or cultural questions; it only held to certain differences which arose at the time of the consistorial elections of 1867, following which a schism came about in the community of Nice. The dissenters took the necessary steps at Paris in connection with the government, to obtain authorization to open a separate place of worship, and their request was granted on condition that the separation be justified formally by taking the title "Reform." How was it that I chose this particular synagogue in preference to the other for my visit on the Saturday following my arrival? Probably curiosity impelled me, who was by instinct a traditionalist, to see in what a "reform" of Judaism could consist. All the same my choice on that morning was fraught with great moment for the rest of my story.

The officiating minister of this independent com-

munity, which indeed had no rabbi, was the venerable Simon Lévy, a man at the same time of exemplary faith and of rare virtues, in whose soul there vibrated powerfully the breath of ancient *Chazanim*.

During half a century, he had consecrated to the community of Nice, at first in the old temple of the ancient ghetto, then in the independent synagogue of the rue du Palais, a consummate knowledge of the Hebraic liturgy and an indefatigable devotion. The ecclesiastical costume used in the official synagogues being forbidden to the dissenters, Simon Lévy wore neither the gown nor the cap of the *Chazanim;* he officiated in top hat, which was as little aesthetic as possible. But when one saw him at the *teba**, and above all when one heard him, one forgot this detail. Pupil of Rabbi Pontremoli of sainted memory, Simon Lévy grew up in the surroundings of a generation of believers for whom religious practices were the sole joy and preoccupation of every moment, and from his sixteenth year he began to conduct religious exercises with remarkable conscientiousness and ability. He brought thereto all the seriousness and the piety of the true *sheliach tzibbur*, the messenger of the community. He put so much soul into the performance of

*Altar.

the liturgic ceremonies, and interpreted the prayers with such singular fervor, that the emotion that overcame him at times, won over his auditors. The disciples of the rue du Palais still remember having seen on the high holydays, a Catholic priest carry his chair into the court of the synagogue, install himself at a window near the *teba*, and follow the Jewish prayers for hours at a time. Thus could a religious soul find edification in taking part in services conducted by this excellent minister.

It was Simon Lévy who revealed to me the beauty of the Jewish liturgy and who also helped me to understand the family character so peculiar to the worship of Israel. In fact, the dwelling of this pious *Chazan,* to which I was soon introduced, was a veritable sanctuary redolent of the perfume of daily observances. There he observed all the domestic ceremonies with the majesty of an ancient patriarch, in the expressive rhythm of the Jewish year. When, after the *kiddush** of Friday evening and the holidays, he gave with deep-felt piety the benediction to his children and grand-children who surrounded him in touching devotion, he appeared to me as a rabbi of ancient days, evoking to my sight all the faith, all the fervor of vanished generations. I was destined some years later to enter into

*Prayer over the wine.

the intimacy of this delightful dwelling, and Simon Lévy, who had received me from the first with such frank friendship, ended by looking upon me as one of his sons; he blessed me with the same tenderness; and I think of it as an exceptional favor of Providence that I was able for a long time to enjoy the benefits of relations so pious and sweet. Thanks to him, I was enabled to know and to understand all the charm of the true Jewish life as it was lived of old. I heard him recall day after day, with never ending interest, the remembrance of the piety of other days, and to have known this dear and noble sage consoles me a little for the sadness to which modern Judaism gives rise, become so indifferent on the whole to the blessed influence of the religion of its ancestors.

In this environment of the "reform" synagogue of Nice, I was received at once in the most cordial manner. People were much interested by the unusual story of a young Christian who was able to follow the prayers in Hebrew. One of those who evinced the greatest sympathy for me was the dean of the community—David Moise, an aged man, pleasant and cultivated. Learning that I intended to pass a part of my vacation in Italy, he earnestly persuaded me to continue my voyage to Leghorn where, he told me, the Chief Rabbi Elijah Ben-

amozegh would be delighted to see me, and could most helpfully guide me. He therefore gave me a letter of introduction to one of his relatives living in Leghorn, and I departed for Italy so that I might arrive in that city on the eve of the Jewish New Year. The Leghorn Jew, to whom I was commended, received me warmly and helped me to see all that the Jewish community could offer of interest to a stranger. The great Temple with its multitude of the faithful on the holidays seemed superb to me; in fact, it is considered the most beautiful in Europe after the synagogue of Amsterdam, and there I conceived a high opinion of the vitality of Italian Judaism. This was the first edifice of such importance that I had visited. Unfortunately the Chief Rabbi, Elijah Benamozegh, to whom I was to be presented, was ill at the moment, and he did not appear in the Temple during the services of Rosh Hashanah*. I left Leghorn without having seen him, which was a matter of keen disappointment to me, because after all that had been told me about him at Nice as well as at Leghorn, far from hesitating to present myself to him, I hoped much from meeting him, and in this I was not mistaken.

Nevertheless having returned to Lyons, I took

*The New Year's services.

the first steps in the study of the law, but without neglecting my favorite studies between times, and I continued to nourish the project of embracing Judaism while finding if possible a way of keeping the matter secret, in order to spare my mother the pain that I feared for her. I was no longer thinking of Leghorn, when toward the end of October, I received a letter from Italy from Chief Rabbi Elijah Benamozegh. "I learned with regret," he wrote, "that you asked for me on the New Year's day at the Temple, to which I could not go because I was ill. In thanking you for your kind attention I hasten to place myself at your service, ready to respond to your wishes, as much as possible." This unexpected word was like a message sent me from Heaven.

We should never neglect, in matters spiritual, any act of kindness towards our neighbors, even when according to our human vision it may seem useless to us. In this world responsibilities are not only those of wealth and social position, there are also those of intelligence and knowledge, those of virtue and moral worth. He who has received much as his portion ought be ready to give much to others. This simple note addressed to a young stranger by the illustrious rabbi, to whom the fatigue of age and incessant work might have furnished the best

of reasons to excuse him from writing to an unknown person, this simple word came at an important moment, initiating a correspondence which was to determine my entire religious evolution.

XIII

ELIJAH BENAMOZEGH

"Stand ye in the ways and see
And ask for the old paths,
Where is the good way and walk therein,
And ye shall find rest for your souls."

Jeremiah VI, 16

THE occasion at last presented itself to me to obtain from one of the most eminent representatives of Judaism all the explanations that I could ask, all the counsel that my difficult situation called for, and this help which was so needed, was offered me not within the limitations of a passing interview, but by means of a correspondence which permitted me carefully to examine all the aspects of the serious question before my conscience. Of all possible solutions Providence granted me the best. I felt greatly relieved and was resolved to profit to the utmost by this unexpected help.

In my first letter I gave a faithful account of the phases through which my religious life had passed. It was a new general confession that I addressed

to Leghorn, but it did not meet the fate of that of La Chartreuse, and it is most singular that the rabbi should have better understood the young Catholic who bared his soul to him in all simplicity, than the monk who was trained by the life of the cloister to the understanding of souls. For the one, truth was a treasure to be gained by mighty battling at the price of much toil and sacrifice, whilst to the other it appeared as a discipline of beliefs, the authority of which one may not question without committing the sin of pride.

"Because of the confidence you place in me," wrote Benamozegh, "I must in turn reply with utmost frankness. You fully deserve that I also should bare my soul to you. The subject that occupies us is too sacred to permit the slightest dissimulation on my part, or the faintest reticence. Your Pascal, among others, taught me the respect due to religious unrest, and meeting a believing soul, such as yours, exercises so powerful an attraction over my spirit, that even had I a thousand times as many duties as I have, I should always find time to write to you. I pray that you may understand me better than I am able to express myself, viewing the impossibility of exhausting the subject with which we are to deal. I beg of you above all to believe that, true or false as it may seem to you, nothing which I shall have

to write, nothing that I shall say is improvised for the occasion. Everything is the fruit of long meditations, which date from the time when the first studies of my youth impelled me irresistibly toward the path in which you aim to walk today."

It is difficult to imagine language more likely than this to win the heart. Even now I cannot reread these words and so many others like them, of the revered master, without being filled with respect. The fervor they evinced for the worship of the Good and the True, was more than encouragement for me; it was a light. I felt that Truth existed, that it is beautiful, and that one never seeks it in vain. Thenceforth I no longer doubted that God, who had caused me so vividly to feel the reality of his presence, would not less clearly show me the way in which He would be served by me.

The first question that I put to Benamozegh was a question of a general character, but which it was necessary to explain in my particular case. What ought one think of the opinion according to which an honest man may not change his religion without failing in some way to his duty? Thus the world often judges, though in other ways not inspired by religious sentiments. I was convinced, for my part, that this was only a prejudice founded upon social conveniences. My Catholic education

confirmed me in this point of view, for the church recognized no restriction upon the right of conversion, be it well understood, so that it be exercised to the profit of the church. But what does Judaism teach on the same subject and what advice had a rabbi, its authorized interpreter, to give to me in the position in which I found myself? This is what I wished to know. The reply of Benamozegh was as frank and as clear as I could have desired. It will not fail to startle those who commonly misunderstand the spirit of Judaism on this question. He wrote me as follows:

"Concerning the opinion that every one ought observe the status quo, remain in the religion of his birth, this is what I would say to you; in general, if it be possible without having to sacrifice one's own convictions in any way, there is certainly nothing more desirable than fidelity to the faith of one's fathers, and for him who is in this state of perfect good faith, there is nothing more helpful or better. But pay good heed. When personal convictions no longer correspond to the beliefs in which we have been brought up, when to the contrary they impel us toward another religion, assuredly one ought observe the greatest prudence, examine these questions in all their aspects, and ponder them many times with all the application of which one's intelligence is capable. If one be a man of letters, or

in the contrary case, suspend one's judgment and set oneself resolutely to study in order to be able to take a position with knowledge of the subject. But if the studies to which one devote oneself and the years that pass, only confirm the conviction that one is in error, if more and more it appears clearly to us that the truth is elsewhere, then tell me by what right can I continue to deny it, in going through the act of submission, which according to the cry of my conscience is error?

In these wise and noble words the great soul of the master revealed itself to me. He had written in the preface of his *History of the Essenes*: "The first right of our fellow creatures is to get the truth from us." For him nothing could prevail against fidelity to the light of conscience, against the love of Truth carried, if necessary, to the most heroic sacrifices. Such words left no door open to any compromise, to any attenuation of duty to truth, and seemed to place me logically under the obligation of embracing Judaism in order to obey my conscience. The rest of this reply which plunged me into amazement will seem remarkable to my readers.

"All that I write you is from a general point of view, and thus purely theoretical. In effect, I hasten to declare, this has no application to your

particular case, in the duty you believe you have, to become converted to Judaism in the sense in which you understand it. Surely, if you feel yourself imperatively moved to do this, if you absolutely demand it because without it the peace of your soul is not possible, then without doubt, I would be the first to say to you, as the Talmud obliges us to say in regard to whosoever demands this privilege, for it is a privilege to enter into the Synagog: 'If you desire at every cost, that it should be so, if no argument to the contrary can swerve you, then welcome in the name of God. *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.*' But know well, read this word and meditate thereon, reread it again, meditate again, for it holds for you the key to the entire religious question: to be at one with truth, in the grace of our God, to belong to the true religion what more can I tell you—to be our brother, as you would be, you need not embrace Judaism in the way you think of doing, I mean by submitting to the yoke of our Law.

"We Jews have in our keeping the religion destined for the entire human race, the *only* religion to which the Gentiles shall be subject and by which they are to be *saved,* truly by the Grace of God, as were our Patriarchs before the Law. Could you suppose that the true religion, that which God destines for all humanity, dates only from Moses, and carries the impress of a special people? What an error! Learn that the plan of God is vaster. The religion of humanity is no other than *Noachism,* not that it was instituted by Noah, but

because it dates from the covenant made by God with humanity in the person of this just man. Here is the religion preserved by Israel to be transmitted to the Gentiles. This is the path which lies open before your efforts, before mine as well, to spread the knowledge thereof, as it is my duty to do. And it lies before the efforts of any one, whosoever believes in Revelation, without necessarily adhering to Mosaism, which is the particular statute of Israel, or to the Christian, or to the Moslem churches, because these are founded on the principle of the abolition of the Law even for the Jews, and because they ignore in the Jewish prophets all that you yourself have so well known how to find in them.

"I invite you to turn your thoughts toward that which existed before the thought had come to Peter to impose the Mosaic Law upon the Gentiles, and to Paul to exempt the Jews themselves from the Law; in which both were mistaken, as though they knew nothing of the central ideas of the Judaism which was their own. It was a matter of returning to the ancient principle: Mosaism for the Jews (and for those who, strangers to Israel by birth, and without being held by any bond, wish nevertheless to belong to Israel), and the religion of the patriarchs for the Gentiles. And as this religion whose triumph the patriarchs foretold for Messianic times, as the religion of humanity converted to the worship of the true God, is no other than *Noachism,* one may continue to call it Christianity, disencumbered, of course, of the trinity and the incarnation, beliefs

which are contrary to the Old Testament, and perhaps even to the New."

But here is the delicate matter on which Jew and Christian have always been separated. The Rabbi of Leghorn declared nevertheless that a reconciliation is not impossible, and he returned with too much insistence to this subject for it not to have been the expression of a well established conviction:

"As to the person of Jesus of whom you do not speak, I tell you nevertheless, because it is important and because possibly the question is most legitimately at the bottom of your thoughts, that on condition that divinity be not attributed to him, there would be no reason whatever not to make of him a prophet, to consider him a man charged by God with an august religious mission, without because of this altering any part of the ancient word of God, and without abolishing for the Jews the Mosaic Law, as his disciples pretended to do, thus misrepresenting his explicit teachings. See Matthew V, 17-19.*

*The verses that Benamozegh here cites are the following: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you 'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one title shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.'"

"The future of the human race lies in this formula. If you come to convince yourself of it, you will be much more precious to Israel than if you submit to the Law of Israel. You will be the instrument of the Providence of God to humanity.

"See how God's plan for you is in consonance with your present duty. If ever you could have thought that, through the compulsion of your religious convictions you were called upon to inflict torture upon the heart of your mother, know that Judaism, far from prescribing anything of the kind, asks you to take an entirely contrary attitude, and places your filial duty in accord with your religious duty. I would not speak to you with too much hardihood, but I cannot withhold from you that your duty shuts out the Catholic priesthood.

"If your faith today were that of your childhood who would dare to turn you from it? But in your state of mind what torture you will prepare for yourself and what sacrilege if you preach beliefs that you know to be lies! No, no, nothing can force you to a perpetual dissimulation that will become the martyrdom of your life. If, as so many others, you were a sceptic, you might as well preach one doctrine as another, but it is your right that I speak to you as to a believer. And then . . . truly I am surprised that I have expressed myself so freely. See therein only a proof of my great sincerity and of the deep interest that you have inspired in me."

The conclusion of this letter filled me with ad-

miration of the elevation of thought of my illustrious correspondent, and for the Jewish doctrine which he represented, and which did no violence to my feelings as a loving son, desiring if it might be possible to avoid giving pain to her who was the dearest being in the world to me. How different to the language of that enthusiast, who one day in good faith no doubt, but misguided by the very letter of her gospel, had imperiously driven me to an act through which my mother suffered cruelly. There is even in the most sincere fanaticism evident error, since it outrages the fundamental principles of religion which it pretends to defend. The words of Benamozegh full of wisdom and of gentleness bore the stamp of truth.

All the same, I do not know if the statement of the rabbi, which seems so luminous to me today, will seem equally clear to my readers, and I must confess to my great shame that at the moment when I first read it, my perplexity was great, and I altogether misunderstood the meaning of his words, which had the effect upon me of a plea in favor of a certain conception of Christianity. I fancied that the Jewish theologian was inviting me to join a quite conventional form of Christianity, that could be explained in my own way, and wherein the figure of Jesus would become the object of a discreet ra-

tionalistic worship, that would express the thought of modern liberal Protestantism. But Protestantism, because of its lack of logic, had always filled me with an unconquerable dislike. It embodied to my mind a phase of evolution that I had outgrown. As to the person of Jesus, the lack of serious bases that would enable us to arrive at a clear idea of his rôle in history, made me rather believe that the best way to enter into the thoughts of the master, of which the centuries have regrettably changed the form, was still more to deepen the teachings of the religion of his fathers, for which he seems, not even according to the gospels, to have ever dreamed of substituting another religion.

On the other hand, the intellectual and religious training that I owed to Catholicism made me think of religion as a collection of beliefs and practices having authority over conscience, and necessary to the salvation of the soul.

Ought not the worship that one knows to be stained with error make way for that which one recognizes as the very expression of truth? The religion that Benamozegh was presenting to me did not seem to hold a providential solution of the problem. *Noachism,* of which I was hearing for the first time, surprised and repelled me as an inconsistent thing, the name of which was even strange.

Not to be any longer a Christian and to retain the name, not to be a Jew and yet after a fashion to acclaim Judaism, was an equivocal position which had no attraction for me.

Thus despite all the admiration that I had already professed for the doctrines of Judaism, I did not yet see it in its true light. I continued to belittle it to the proportions of a church with definite outlines, competing with other churches outside of which there could be neither inward peace nor fruitful activity for a soul in that stage of faith wherein I found myself.

XIV

THE CATHOLICISM OF ISRAEL

I EXPRESSED my doubts with utter frankness in the letters which I wrote to the Rabbi of Leghorn, begging for explanations, which brought me an unusual reply. The following letter which I received from him throws light upon various aspects of Jewish doctrine, assuredly not generally known.

"Before all things I wish you to be fully assured that the *Noachic* religion that you say you heard mentioned by me for the first time (and the majority of people are in your class) is not a discovery that I personally have made, still less is it of my contriving, a sort of more or less happy polemic expedient. No, it is an established fact discussed in every page of our Talmud, generally admitted by our wise men, to be little known and much misunderstood. Added to this is the difficulty of the subject which we are discussing. It alone can explain to us the uncertainties and the diverse tendencies which have manifested themselves on the question of the Mosaic Law in the early days of Christianity.

There we see the central point, where the break arose between Judaism and Christianity which has been stressed more and more.

"Judaism makes a distinction between Jews and Gentiles. According to its teachings, its leaders are subject as priests of humanity to the hierarchy of Moses, while the laymen are only subject to the ancient and abiding universal religion, to the service of which Jews and Judaism are utterly dedicated. Christianity on the contrary created the most unhappy confusion, either in imposing the Law on the Gentiles through Peter and James and the Jewish Christians with them, or in abolishing through Paul this same Law for the Jews themselves. Consider all things well and in their relations to each other, and you will see that *Noachism,* which astonishes you, is nothing else than *Messianism,* the authentic form of Christianity of which Israel was the guardian and the mouthpiece. I repeat to you that this does not exclude the possibility for every *Noachide* (the layman of humanity) who feels the call to the priesthood of humankind, otherwise known as the Law of Israel, to use his right which, do not forget it, never becomes a duty to embrace Mosaism, namely to enter the priesthood itself.

"If I understand you correctly, *Noachism* seems

to you a far distant and superannuated thing, and you ask how, after nineteen centuries of Christianity, after all the religious progress that our Bible and your Gospel represent, I can dream of taking you back to the rudiments of the worship founded after the flood. Is this possible? Yes, and is it possible that you do not see that perpetuity, that future immutability could not exist save on condition that they also existed in the past?

"There is no doubt that the Bible, aside from the universalistic passion of the prophets, gives the impression that in the carrying out of the compact made with the fathers, God was chiefly concerned with the chosen people, to the exclusion of other peoples. Hence the accusation leveled against Judaism that it could never rise in its entirety above the conception of a national God." To this objection Benamozegh replies:

"Can it be imagined for a single moment that after having concerned himself so much with the descendants of Noah, which means with all humanity, according to Genesis, God, after long centuries of waiting, would give a special law to the Israelites appointed to be the priests of humanity, and would not have troubled himself in any way about the rest of the human race, rejecting it, until the appearance of Christianity, leaving it totally abandoned, with-

out revelation and without law? And again, is it reasonable to conceive that in abolishing the *Noachide* covenant of Genesis—and where is that abolition to be found—would God during all this long interval leave no other resource to man than the help of his poor reason? This would have been unreasonable, unjust, improvident, unworthy even of a mortal, for it would entirely undermine faith in the necessity of Revelation.

"No, no; all this is impossible, and consequently not only has the *Noachide* law never ceased to be in force, but even Israel, with its special code, Mosaism, was created for it, to safeguard it, to teach it, to spread it. The Jews thus exercised, I repeat, the function of priests of humanity, and found themselves subject in this way to the priestly rules which concern them exclusively: the law of Moses.

"But you ask me, where can one find the code of this *Noachic* Law, of this universal religion, which is true Catholicism? First, admit that if this code did not exist, it would be the fault of God himself not to have established it, or not to have assured its perpetuity. Nobody, indeed, will maintain that the *Noachic* covenant of Genesis is but an unimportant incident and not a matter of great moment. Further, do you not see that Genesis itself contains

precepts given to Noah for all his descendants? This solemn covenant of God with Noah and his offspring is recalled by Isaiah (LIV.9); it is a covenant sanctioned by the divine promise with the rainbow as pledge of perpetuity. Up to the last pages of the Prophets, Noah is with Daniel and Job one of the three just men held up as examples.

"And yet all this is a small matter compared to the great thing which the Talmud reveals to us. This monument of Tradition occupies itself in fact with a marked predilection for everything that concerns the *Noachic* religion and legislation."

The master insisted on this point with all the more earnestness because these things are unknown to Christians and even to the majority of Jews.

"Not alone does the Talmud comment upon, and develop as far as possible the Mosaic and prophetic texts on this subject, but it opens wide the sources of tradition, rich in many other ways, concerning the ideas of this universal religion. And this, mark well, at the very moment when Israel, its savants in the lead, was exposed to continual persecution, and was placed under the ban of humanity. Yes, it was between two scaffolds, between two funeral piles that these great sages, these wonderful

martyrs discussed and codified with amazing strength of spirit and with angelic serenity, the religion of humanity, the *Noachic* law, as much as, and even in greater measure than the Jewish laws themselves.

"You will find there in abundance the fundamental elements of the code that you are seeking and you who know Hebrew can, without difficulty, convince yourself of it. We who are not Karaites, the Protestants of Judaism, we who like the Catholics venerate tradition, find ourselves quite at ease on many questions and particularly on this one. If one take into account the circumstances in the midst of which the wise men of the Talmud discussed these questions, their discussions bear the divine seal, beyond cavil. They make an impress upon the faith and upon the admiration of every one;—they raise to a height that even you do not dream of, Rabbinic Judaism and its authorized interpreters;—and if you yield yourself to this admiration, do not imagine that in so doing you oppose the word of Jesus in his vehement denunciation of the Pharisees, adherents of precisely that school which gave to the world the mighty example of abnegation. It is now well established that there were good as well as bad Pharisees, and the latter

were flayed in the Talmud with less restraint even then in the Gospels."

The agreement of the Synagogue with the Catholic Church on the question of tradition and of its rôle in revealed religion was often the subject of the commentaries of Benamozegh, concerned as all his writings were with finding a meeting place for them.

"You seem dissatisfied with the antiquity of *Noachism,* and you do not realize that antiquity is the most infallible sign of truth. Consequently, the further back it goes, the more it appeals to us. You ask for subsequent developments. Nothing hinders you from achieving them. It is indeed the spirit of the *Noachic* revelation, as it is of the Mosaic revelation, and that is *the same Revelation,* that it is changeless and progressive at the same time. You want nothing to do with simple deism and you are right a thousand times; I speak of the deism of the philosophers. As to the *Noachic* deism, it is the pure monotheism of Moses and of our prophets, and in dogmatic definition, there is in reality, and there should be, no distinction between Mosaism and *Noachism.* The only difference is of a practical nature. It consists simply in a little

more freedom granted according to *Noachism* as to metaphysical or even theological speculations. Very far from permitting it to sink into pure rationalism, our tradition imposes upon the *Noachic* proselyte, called later the proselyte of the gate, one formal condition, the acceptance of this same religion, not at all as the simple fruit of human reason but as the teaching of divine Revelation. What more could you desire?

"I have just spoken of the proselyte of the gate, that is to say, of the *Noachide* in person. It is in truth with the *Noachide* himself that the Pentateuch is concerned in specifying that this proselyte is in no way obliged to observe the Mosaic law. This is so true that the Torah obliges us to give to him the animal which it is forbidden to us Jews to eat. We must give it to him instead of selling it to the stranger, or Gentile, or pagan, obvious proof that according to the Pentateuch, this proselyte is no longer considered a Gentile or pagan, neither is he assimilated to the Jew. So what does he represent, if not precisely this *Noachide* whose name sounds so strange to your ear? The difficulty which you experience does not hinder the *Noachide* from becoming a part of the Church Universal; on the contrary, it is the *Noachides* themselves who make up the faithful, the people of that true Catholic Church

of which Israel is the priest. Israel would have no reason to exist if these people of God did not also exist. What are the priests, I ask you, without the laymen? What would *I,* a Jew be, if *you,* who are not a Jew, were not here as a faithful member of the great Church of God in whose services I find myself placed?"

One can not sufficiently admire the way in which the master used language that could be most easily understood in addressing himself to a young Catholic. But what was even more remarkable was that here was no position assumed for the occasion because of the needs of the argument; but the exact expression of his beliefs.

"You see, then, that you are greatly mistaken in speaking of *isolation,* of *individualism.* I will not cease repeating to you, that the *Noachide* has his place with the only Universal Church, faithful to that religion, as the Jew is the priest thereof, charged, do not forget this, to teach humanity the religion of its layman, as it is held, in that which concerns him personally, and to practice the religion of the priests. Without doubt every layman has the right to become a priest, that is, you are free to become a Jew, if you absolutely demand it, pro-

vided that you realize perfectly that you are in no wise bound in conscience to do so, and that it is in no way necessary, nor even desirable.

"Here is the exact expression of the doctrine of Judaism. Here is one side of Judaism, and to my thinking it is the greatest, although it has escaped, I admit, and still too generally, escapes attention. But it is none the less an incontrovertible truth; it is the most important key to all the difficulties that one encounters in the religious history of humanity, and notably in the relations of biblical religions among themselves.

"If you adopt the religious position that I would like to see you adopt, you will really belong to Judaism and to Christianity at the same time, the latter under the correction of Judaism on three essential points; the question of the Incarnation, the manner of understanding the Trinity, and the abolition of the Mosaic Law for the Jews themselves.

"I have said that you are free to become a priest —I mean a Jewish priest—or to remain a *Noachide* —that is to say, a layman. But know that in remaining a layman you will, as a *Noachide,* be free—and the Jew is not so—to take from the Jewish Law, from Mosaism all that suits your personal religious need in the way of precept, but which would not be

an obligation, while the Jew has not the freedom to choose; he is subject to the entire Law."

The master then approached the main question of the abolition of the Law, of which Paul made himself the indefatigable apostle. According to him, as Christianity had the right to preach the great principle of *universal brotherhood,* a principle drawn from Judaism, but which he was wrong in not tempering by that of *national fraternity,* he was equally right to proclaim the independence of the non-Jews in regard to the Mosaic law, but he could not see that the religious balance required the maintenance of this law for the Jews.

"No, it was not Jesus who refused to subject the Gentiles to the Mosaic Law, it was Judaism itself, it was Moses, it was God himself following the plan he established in the beginning. Jesus certainly did not wish it, and in this he was right, he saw much more clearly than did Peter and James, as he also saw much more clearly than did Paul, when declaring that he came not to abolish the Law, he held his brother Jews under the authority of the Law by that very fact. What am I doing in speaking to you as I do, if not bringing you back to him and to his pure teaching? Yes, Jesus was right, and de-

served all praise when he gave freedom to the Gentiles in regard to the Mosaic Law, but his disciples erred when later they proclaimed the same liberty for the Jews.

"Remember this: you will be in error, in your turn, you will retrograde, if you become converted to Judaism imagining that you are embracing the only true religion destined for all humanity. Such a conversion would only be possible for you,—I do not say desirable,—if you take Judaism for what it is, that is to say, thinking of it as a priesthood. This supposes quite naturally another aspect of the same religion, another law, if you will, called Christianity or *Noachism* as you please. You can remain within this Christianity, on condition, of course, that it be reviewed and corrected by the Jewish priesthood."

It is impossible to explain more clearly what the master himself called the Catholicism of Israel. One feels that such words reflect something quite other than an individual opinion, they have all the majesty of authentic tradition which they faithfully interpret.

"I would not leave the statement of this very important point, of this vital doctrine of true Judaism,

the possible and peaceful coexistence, even the necessary dependence of these two aspects, of these two elements, of the *Church of God*: the Jewish priesthood and the lay statute or *Noachide* which is that of the non-Jews, without showing you the importance attached to it by our Talmud. You know with what earnestness Moses had warned us concerning sacrifices made outside of the sacred precincts. Very well, according to our doctrine, this restriction does not exist for the *Noachide* and even to the contrary, Jesus is the faithful echo of our tradition when he foretells a time when the worship of God will be observed everywhere, of course, by the Gentiles—a means of reconciling these words with those of Isaiah, 'I will lead them to my holy mountain.'

"We are forced to this conclusion: does the Catholicism of your birth satisfy the ideal I have explained? With the frankness of an honest man, without the shadow of a racial or religious prejudice, but on the contrary with all the sympathy I have always had for Christianity in general—for Catholicism in particular—and I have been reproached for it,—with Maimonides and Juda Halevi, our sages, who see in real Christianity the precursor of future Messianism, I reply to you—*yes* and *no* at the same time. *Yes,* insofar as it is in accord with

the immutable truth that it has combated, while pretending by a singular contradiction to be immutable, and notably in that which concerns the belief in tradition in general which belong to Catholicism. *No,* insofar as it strays from the doctrine professed by the leadership that God himself appointed from the days of the Pentateuch until the end of Prophetism and its last echoes with Malachi.

"For you, for all those who would belong to the true religion without entering the Jewish priesthood, the one road to follow is clearly defined: it is *Noachism* or proselytism of the gate,* without the obligations of the Mosaic Law, though under its direction, a religion whose statutes were made before the days of Jesus, nay, since the remotest days of antiquity, under the care of Judaism and recorded in its sacred books and in its abiding traditions. The supreme duty for you as for me, is to remember these truths, to bring them to light, to say to Christianity, to Islam, to all humanity; here is the true Messianism of Jesus, which Paul and Peter tore to tatters, each in his way; and of which each in his way snatched a shred so that only experiments imperfectly realized resulted, and even counter-

*There were two kind of proselytes, the proselytes of righteousness who completely accepted the Jewish religion and the proselytes of the gate, who accepted it only in part. (Trans.)

feits of the true Messianism. I have spoken with an open heart to you, disguising nothing of the true Jewish doctrine, adding nothing to it, holding nothing back, nor veiling aught of my most sincere and my oldest convictions."

How could one but revere the sincerity of the master who, without fear of offending the prejudices of his own coreligionists, did not cease in all his writings to return to this *Catholic* doctrine, assuring to Judaism a place quite apart, among all other religions? A great Christian with whom I was soon to enter into relations, was able to write on the day on which it was given to him to understand: "Elijah Benamozegh has dealt justly with an error commonly made by us Christians; which consists in not seeing anything in Judaism but a national monotheism, an ethnic religion. He shows us in the ancient traditions of Israel the clearest Universalist aspirations, without any mental reservations, looking toward the subjection of the Gentiles to Mosaism."

XV

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

WHO CAN define the place that regrets occupy in our lives? I do not mean those connected with inevitable mourning and the grief which strikes us down at every loss that we are bound to suffer. I am thinking of the hours wasted, of the opportunities lost through our own fault, of possibilities we have neglected. At our side there was a cherished human being, whose happiness was in our hands, and the time to give happiness was limited; we did not understood all that we ought do until that being was taken from us. A way lay open before us which might make it possible for us to achieve great things, but misguided at the crossroads, we only recognized our error at the moment when it was too late to turn back.

When I reread for the hundredth time today the fine letter of Benamozegh in the preceding chapter, it seemed to me that a youthful spirit already wholly freed from the dogmatism of his childhood, and eager to consecrate himself to the service of God

and of humanity, must find in it a purpose that could arouse his enthusiasm and a program of activity broad enough to enlist his energies. Nonetheless, I repeat, I did not at that moment grasp the doctrine so simple and true, that the revered master had explained with so much clarity. Instead of permitting myself to be won over by the grandeur of the ideal and the beauty of his whole thought, I lingered to discuss details.

I admitted that the Christian might live by the Gospel, and that the Jew on his side be guided by the Mosaic Law, but in the position which the rabbi invited me to occupy, I saw myself placed between the Law which did not concern me, and the Gospel, which I no longer accepted as a basis of religion. I thus found myself without any other support than a theoretic plan which confused all my earlier conceptions. Benamozegh answered my objections in the following letter.*

"I come to the questions you put to me on the subject of the code of *Noachism*. Know that the primitive form of all Revelation which continues even after the introduction of the Mosaic Law, and which still exists in our own day in the heart of the Jewish people, the form which biblical teachings

*December 30, 1895. Dictated by the master to his disciple, Samuele Colombo.

have long preserved, comes of oral tradition. The same condition obtained in regard to the first Christian documents, and it is not surprising that the Noachic religion found itself in the same position and that everything connected with it was scattered through the Old Testament, and in the written documents where the ideas of tradition were successively introduced—Mishna, Talmud, Midrash, etc.

"You would have experienced serious embarrassment if, at the time of the patriarchs, and even at the period of the prophets, any one had asked you where the code of religion was then. Nevertheless, this code existed, and the existence of a religious law constituting the statute to which the Gentiles were bound to conform cannot be contested.

"It is thus from the deep source of Hebrew tradition, placed in these literary monuments, that I have just named, that one must drink without fear of ever exhausting it. This is its glory, and this makes it possible to measure the extent of its mission.

"You are mistaken if you think that the Gentiles having left the shadows of Paganism at the behest of the apostles began to return to the God of Noah and of Abraham with a book in their hands. The book came much later, as you know. The Gospel drew its inspiration from tradition, and without making the pretention of distinguishing between what belonged to the person of the founder of Christianity, and what is the work of his disciples, one has a right to believe that the Gospel did not exhaust the *Noachic* Tradition, as Israel possessed it, and there is no reason to suppose that what was

given to the Gentiles was lacking in any way in fidelity. One must guard against confusing the Gospel preached by the Apostles, with the book of that name, for the important thing was the Good News announced by the disciples of Jesus—the book came later."

The master concluded by saying that the true Hebrew tradition touching the religion of humanity, is to be sought for, not in the Christian Church, as it is, nor in evangelical documents, but only in the records preserved by Israel looking toward the spreading of this religion, and also to the maintenance of its own particular code.

But though I admitted all this, it did not yet solve my own difficulties, and it did not give me a clearly defined religious status. Would I not stand between the Christians who could no longer understand me, and the Jews, who would also misunderstand me? To these fears which I often expressed the master replied in the same letter with careful explanations:

"You seem to see the phantom of individualism rising up against you. Why speak of isolation? I see all about you an infinite multitude of believers! I grant you, that the outward signs may not be visible, but nonetheless, you will truly be of the com-

munion of the Church of God, the Church of Abraham, which the Prophets foretold, and which was, in a smaller or larger measure established in the world by the work of Christianity, and of Islam, but above all, you will be in communion with Israel, which must recognize in you the perfectly legitimate representative of *Noachism,* of the true believers of the future.

"However, if an outward bond be indispensable to you, if you cannot be content with that which the Jewish religion offers you, I am greatly mistaken if you cannot find in the large number of Christian Churches, a church professing a liberty of faith concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation, that may be reconcilable with the tradition which is the prototype of Israel. I also believe that concerning the observance of Mosaism there would be conceded to the faithful, the right of professing their thoughts and of practicing all that conscience dictates. Why should you not become a member of such a Church?"

But as he realized that this solution could not meet the difficulties I had revealed to him and those he believed existed secretly in the depth of my soul, Benamozegh added in his own hand, the following lines:

"In the path I have indicated as being the true way open before you, you will be in intimate communion with Israel, taking part as you list in its worship and its ceremonies, and what is more, if you wish, even without renouncing Jesus. Let us understand one another well: on condition that you see in Jesus only a just man, a prophet, only a man, however lofty you may wish to imagine him. And it will be the easier for you to reconcile this with conceptions of Judaism which you well know were in the teachings of Jesus most sympathetic to the conservation of Mosaism.

"And who can tell if you are not destined to become the bond of union between Christianity and Judaism?"

The reader may ask with astonishment, what could be the reason of the insistence with which Benamozegh returned to the question of Jesus who, at no time occupied an important place in the letters I addressed to him. I even believe that I passed it over in silence, and possibly this very silence moved the master to express himself clearly on the subject.

His motive is easy to understand. Informed as he was on the Christian religion, and not only on its historic data but on its theology also, he must

have said to himself that the personality of Jesus necessarily played a preponderant rôle in the thoughts of a Christian by birth, and formed the crux of the difficulties that he would encounter in his evolution towards Judaism. His manner of expression must be astounding to the majority of Christians. Because of their acceptance of legends, and their domination by prejudices, they generally imagine that the heart of the Jew is inevitably filled with bitter hatred against the hero of the Gospel. When some romancer pictures the Jews of a village lost in the Carpathian mountains, spitting despitefully as they pass by the crucifixes that extend their great arms of pity over the sad country, they take the coarseness of the gesture and the imprecations which accompany it, for the accurate and traditional expression of the sentiments of the entire synagogue. The gesture may be authentic and equally so the childish maledictions. But I dare to say that nothing of all of this is really meant for the person of Jesus himself, of whom these shut-in and ignorant Jews have never known anything. It was the centuries of persecutions inflicted on their people in the name of the crucified one, which evoked against his image this unintelligent and shocking protest. Can one really refuse to forgive them when one considers the misery and the sorrows

which formed the course of their history because of the unworthy conduct of the followers of Jesus, ever forgetful of the most elementary lessons of the Gospel?

In any case I owe it to the truth to witness to Christians who will read these lines that I have known Jews of all types, of every social class, of all degrees of culture; that generally I met with indifference to the name of Jesus, a certain repugnance toward claiming him as a Jew of the prophetic lineage which would nevertheless be most logical; but never the feeling of hatred that is attributed to them, and Benamozegh no doubt deemed it of importance to dispel the common error in this respect.

It is not only the relations between Jews and Christians which have changed because of the political and social transformations that have come about in all countries, it is also the manner of envisaging the religious problem from one side and another. Persons of scientific culture know what to think of the origins of Christianity. And nothing in the future can prevent educated Jews from returning to the truth of history in restoring to Jesus, insofar as we can know anything certain on the subject, the place that is due to him in the religious history of the world and of Judaism in particular,—with which

the rabbi of the sermon on the Mount certainly never broke at any moment of his life.

Without going as far as certain modern rabbis*, who are not afraid to give to Jesus, through reaction against the habitual reserve of the synagogue, a place out of proportion with the lack of certainty of the Gospel story, Benamozegh, with his independence of judgment and his love of truth, did not hesitate to facilitate comprehension for Christians of the true Messianism, in showing them in what measure it could be reconciled with the facts of their own tradition.

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*For example, Rabbi Leonard Levy, of Pittsburgh, Reform rabbi of indefatigable religious industry. The question of Jesus considered by him "the great Jew" constantly recurs in his sermons. Equally significant is the work of Rabbi Enelow, "A Jewish View of Jesus," New York, 1920.

XVI

MEETING WITH THE MASTER

THE LETTERS of the Chief Rabbi of Leghorn are not of those that one forgets after having read them. They mapped out a veritable program of religious life, and demanded firm decisions of me. This correspondence led me to decide that no duty of conscience compelled me to leave the Church of my birth, and that, even to the contrary, accepting the reservations indicated by the master, I might reconcile the outward profession of Catholicism with the faith of Abraham, of Moses and of the prophets.

Since the *Noachism* of which Benamozegh wrote to me had no definite form and possessed no outward organization there was no incongruity in calling it by the name of Christianity, even more logically by that of Catholicism, which is in more complete accord with the universalism of the prophets, could I not content myself with a purely moral conversion without expressing it in any form of religious practices? I searched in vain through the letters of Benamozegh for definite counsel in this matter, but could find none. He reiterated insistently, that

far from finding myself isolated, as I feared, I was really surrounded by a multitude of believers, belonging to the true Church. Was he not alluding to that great invisible religion, to that soul of the Church Universal, to which Father Gratry, of noble heart and high intelligence, consecrated such beautiful pages in his *Philosophy of the Credo?*

Without barring the possibility of complete conversion to Judaism in the future, I was inclined to hold in abeyance for the moment the whole purpose from which my filial duty bade me refrain. It was in this spirit that I wrote to the Rabbi of Leghorn, and I did not conceal from him that no form of Protestantism, no religious sect, howsoever unitarian one might conceive it, could satisfy me, that I felt an unconquerable repugnance toward accepting such a solution and that if I left the Church of my birth, it could could only be for the one from which it sprang.

Under the guidance of the master who sought to lead me, with unwearying kindness, I devoted myself to studying the books which he had suggested, and which a Frankfurt library procured for me. *The En Yaakob,* an Haggadic compilation by Jacob Ibn Habib, the *Menorat ha Maor* of Isaac Aboab, and the *Mesillat Yesharim* of Moses Haim Luzzatto, were the first books which he placed in my

hands. All the evenings that I had the joy of spending at our dear fireside I devoted to these Hebrew books, and I also made a careful study of the daily ritual, and of the *Mahzor**. Practical minded people will say that it would have been much more useful and more sensible to have diligently examined the compilations of Sirey or of Dalloz, which would have been more in keeping with my professional occupation. There is too much common sense in this observation for me to wish to contradict it, but I believe that in what seems folly in the eyes of the world, there is oftimes a hidden wisdom.

At that time my dear maternal grandmother, who spent the last years of her life with us, had her usual place in our quiet evenings. She was of Italian extraction, and though she had lost her sight, she retained to the end a charming and lovable gaiety. Someone said to her one day: "I believe your grandson is thinking of becoming a priest." Whereupon she replied cheerily: "To tell you the truth, he is thinking of becoming a rabbi, but with all that, you know, he remains unchanged."

I had the most ardent desire to travel to Italy again, and this time to have an interview with Benamozegh. As soon as I found it possible to

*Mahzor—Prayer book of the festivals.

carry out this plan I informed the rabbi of my intended visit to Leghorn.

I went directly to Rome at the beginning of my vacation. Father Henri had given me a letter of introduction to the *Maestro di camera* at the Vatican, in order to obtain an audience with the Pope, although receptions were officially suspended during the summer months. I had the satisfaction of knowing that my request was granted, but it was only after two months of waiting, on the day before I left for Naples, that the courier of the Vatican came to bring me the invitation to present myself on that very day at the Sala Clementina. It was there that I was to be admitted to see Leo XIII at the moment of his return from his daily walk in the gardens. Surrounded by prelates, he appeared in a sedan-chair which was set down before us. We were only four visitors, on our knees in that immense room.

I shall never forget the diaphanous hand of that aged man which was extended to me, or the extraordinary brilliancy of those eyes which were fixed upon me. I asked the Pope to bless my mother, that being the chief aim of my visit. "I bless you with your dear mother," said he to me in French. "Be a good son and a good Christian." And when in reply to his question, I told him I had come from

Lyons he added: "It is one of the cities of Mary, and is very dear to us." The audience only lasted a few moments, and the cortege having resumed its march, disappeared through the opposite doorway, a white vision which left with me an impression of serene grandeur.

At Naples I embarked for Palermo, and it was only during the days that preceded my return from Italy, after this excursion into Sicily and another stay in Rome, that I stopped at Leghorn. I was eager to save my visit to Benamozegh for the end of the journey, not wishing other memories to lessen the vividness of this. I also desired to be at Leghorn for the first day of the Jewish New Year.

I was able to see the rabbi at the great Temple during the service, and in observing him at the moment of the sounding of the Shofar* I recalled the words which I had read in his correspondence with Luzzatto: "What meaning has this ceremony for you? You can only give to it one of the puerile poetic interpretations which were invented outside of the Cabbala. It is very different for me. Every note has importance, as every atom of matter is a mystery; as each body has its place and its value in

*Shofar—The ram's horn used in synagogue ritual on the New Year's Day.

the whole of creation. For me the Torah* reflects the universe."

Benamozegh sent me word that he would come to see me at the *Albergo del Giappone,* where I was staying. I must admit that I was surprised and even disappointed when he arrived. I no longer saw before me the Cabbalist rabbi in his *talith***, deep in thought as he listened to the strident notes of the Shofar, but a little old man of hesitating gait, negligently attired, who humbly introduced himself without any attempt at dignity, and seemingly without any break in the course of his meditations; for his gaze remained fixed on some inward subject of concentration. I had just come from seeing Leo XIII, and it is easy to see that the contrast could not but seem striking to me. Nevertheless, those who have read the preceding letters with attention, will without doubt realize as I did, that the bearing of their author towards his unknown correspondent was not without a certain majesty.

"I read your last letter with the greatest of pleasure," said Benamozegh to me, "for I saw that the frankness with which I combated certain of your tendencies, far from being unpleasant to you,

*Torah—the scroll of the Law.

**Talith—Praying shawl, used by Orthodox Jews when at prayer.

was welcomed by you, and even bore, if I am not mistaken, some fruit in the way that I hoped it would."

However carefully I kept the notes of this conversation, which I considered a great event in my life, I want to put no words in the mouth of Benamozegh that he did not write and sign with his own hand. What I have just cited and all those that remain to be read to the end of this chapter, constitute the text of a letter that he wrote me to Lyons, dated July 5th. Little time had then elapsed, up to my visit to Leghorn, so that this letter may serve as the exact reproduction of our conversation.

The master spoke slowly and without showing more curiosity regarding me than if the young man before him had been one of his regular students. His words seemed like a lecture, that he was repeating to himself, and he only looked at me when I put a question to him.

"I congratulate myself from the bottom of my heart," said the master, "on the resolution you have made, for thus you are sure not to have regrets*. Later on, the question will narrow itself down to a choice for you between the better of

*I have reason to believe that Benamozegh makes special allusion here to my complete abandonment of every thought of the Catholic priesthood.

two good things. In speaking of your decision I understand that you exclude any form of Protestantism, inasmuch as Protestantism rejects the principle of tradition. I, a Rabbinist, an ardent defender of the Hebrew tradition, can only approve of this decision on your part. But though this may be the matter of a word, I must add that the name *Protestant* is so elastic and comprises, as you well know, so many outward varieties, that it is not astonishing that it should have existed, or that it might culminate, even through you, in a type of Protestantism that would represent *Noachism* in the clearest way, which is the true religion of the *laymen* of humanity, as the Mosaic statute is the religion of the priesthood of humanity, Israel."

"Master," I asked, "what advantage do you find in the solution for which you seem to have so marked a predilection?"

"I am thinking," replied Benamozegh, "of the possibility of your feeling it your duty in conscience to preserve the belief in Jesus, not, be it well understood, as a God-man, but as a just man, and using his teachings as far as possible, when they do not contradict true traditional Judaism. I need not remind you that the violent attacks of Jesus upon the Pharisees and Pharisaism, which would appear to oppose my point of view, are, as has been proven,

leveled at Pharisaic sects, that our *good* Pharisees condemn and deal with still more severely than did Jesus."

"Permit me, Master, to define still more clearly the thought that I have already expressed. The respective positions of religion today seem to me to be clearly defined. I see about me Jews, Catholics, Protestants, but no *Noachides*. This *Noachism* which connotes to me a compromise between Judaism and Christianity, will it not be judged in this way by Christians and by Jews?"

"Pardon me," replied the Master, "but the objection that you raise against *Noachism,* that the respective positions of religion today are clear cut, and that you can nowhere discover the *ben Noah,* this reasoning does not satisfy me. *Noachism a compromise* between Christianity and Judaism? If you will recall what I said in my Introduction to *Israel and Humanity**, you will see that *Noachism* is the true, the only eternal religion of the Gentiles, and that it has its foundation in common with Israel. It is nothing else than true Christianity, that is, what Christianity ought to be, *what it some day will*

*In the beginning of our correspondence Benamozegh had sent me this brochure, his letters to Luzzatto, his volume of Theodice Dio and the pamphlets of his Library of Hebraism.

become. This, according to the Jews is the true religion of the Messianic times."

I replied to Benamozegh, that it did not seem to me that the Jews had a clear conception of the Hebraic doctrine relative to this religion to which they did not seek to recruit adherents. He replied: "Knowing my co-religionists, I know it does not seem right to them to play the rôle of cicerone in the world of the Spirit. They say,—we Jews all are proud of the fundamental principle which is ours:—'The righteous of all nations shall have a share in the world to come.' How then could one imagine for a moment that they would feel the slightest repugnance toward him who without being a Jew nevertheless possesses all that is good in other religions? And if they are educated Jews, in what esteem ought they not hold him who is not a Jew by birth, but is nevertheless exactly that which Judaism wants him to be, since according to Judaism the non-Jew ought be of the *Noachide* religion?"

"And if I declare to you, Master, that I wish to embrace this religion, what then do you advise me?"

"In embracing it you have the choice between two ways which offer themselves to you. You will either be content to profess it for yourself in secret,

"TEMPLE ISRAEL"

leaving to God the care of fructifying the hidden germ, or you will bravely lift up the ancient standard, ancient and modern at the same time. And to prove to you my sincerity, I who, so far as I may, modestly represent ancient Orthodox Judaism,—I will be with you. Yes, I will publicly recognize the correctness of the stand you have taken. On one condition, however, and I hardly need remind you of it, that I know exactly the *credo* of your *Noachism*. It does not necessarily exclude the belief in Jesus, but you know what place can be given to him."

"And what is the practical conclusion of your counsel? I do not speak of my present life but of the one to which God may call me in the future."

"As a practical conclusion," replied Benamozegh, "I have already told you what my preference for you would be. It is not, Heaven preserve me, that I would absolutely discourage you in a tendency which would lead you to the Jewish priesthood. The masters of my masters, Shmaya and Abtalyon, who were the masters of Hillel and of Shammai, were proselytes and I ought receive you as they were received. But two important reasons compel me to persist in the opinion that I have already expressed to you. The first is the desire to begin with you and in you this religious movement which

will bring about the final evolution of Christianity. Following that, the profound conviction that I have that in the new attitude that you would take, you could be much more helpful to Judaism, than if you entered into its bosom, yes, much more helpful from without than from within. But when I say from without, it is a form of speech; in reality the layman, the *Noachide* is not outside of the Church, he is within the Church, he himself is the true Church.

"Yes," concluded Benamozegh, "it is through you that I would begin."

In uttering these words, the master kept his eyes fixed upon me for the first time, and I was struck by the peculiar expression of his gaze. It seemed to say to me: "If you do not understand me you will lose the decisive moment that will never return, while if you walk in the way I point out to you, you will be the man I have been waiting for."

And it is only too true, I have already had occasion to refer to it, that my spirit, shaped by the dogmatic discipline of Catholicism, could with difficulty grasp in its magnitude the Jewish doctrine that Benamozegh put before me. But why should there be astonishment at the difficulty which I felt in seeing in Judaism nothing more than a religion constituted on the same plan as the others,

when I maintain that so many Israelites by birth no less gravely misunderstand the nature of their own spiritual heritage, the relations of particularism and of universalism within Judaism, its relation to the great religions, in a word, the whole of the divine plan?

"At whatever moment you may have need of my aid," said the master, "do not hesitate to call on me. There is nothing I will not be ready to do to help you, and I hope I may succeed." It will later be seen how this promised assistance was effectively given to me.

I cannot here reproduce the conclusion of the conversation, which lasted many hours. It does not directly bear on the subject of this narrative. I had the conviction in listening to Benamozegh, that I was in the presence of a man of God, gleaming, to use Catholic parlance, with supernatural light. I make allowance for the quality of his Cabalism, which in the eyes of the rationalist of modern Judaism, is altogether wrong, and ground for suspicion and disdain. Far be it from me to think of limiting by scholastic definitions the great mystery of divine revelation, and the gift of prophecy. I simply say that no human being ever spoke to me as did this rabbi. Those who once in their lives have had the privilege of meeting a man who lives

the higher life of the spirit, will understand the thought of the philosopher Malebranche which I apply to the Rabbi of Leghorn. "The human soul may attain to the knowledge of an infinity of beings and even to the infinite being; it is not within itself that it perceives them because they are not there, but in God. Divinity is so closely united to one's soul by its presence that one can say that soul is the abode of spirit, as space is the abode of bodies."

The conversation ended, I accompanied Benamozegh a short distance through the streets of Leghorn,—then he begged me to leave him. I followed him with my eyes, while he walked away with slow steps, absorbed in thoughts which he accompanied by involuntary gestures. Some passers-by saluted him respectfully, others looked at him with curiosity and surprise because of the oddity of his appearance.

This was not my last visit to Leghorn, but it was our only interview. For those who refuse to consider aught but that which can be weighed and measured and counted, this conversation will appear a very short period of study on the part of a disciple at the feet of his master. It can possibly be judged differently if one recall some fugitive moment of life and all the significance it may have had in our destiny.

Elijah Benamozegh died at Leghorn on February

5th, 1900. Two years before his death our correspondence had come to an end. When I learned at Lyons of the death of the master, I immediately felt a keen desire to return to Leghorn, to make a pilgrimage to his tomb. I could not carry out this plan until August of 1901.

Arrived at Leghorn, I again stopped at the Albergo del Giappone and secured the same room in which four years before I had received the rabbi's visit. I did not try to see either the members of his family, or his disciple and successor, the Chief Rabbi Samuele Colombo. I desired to be alone near the master as at our first meeting. The morning after my arrival I went to the Hebrew School and asked for a guide who could accompany me to the old cemetery where rest, with the ancient Chachamim* of the community of Leghorn, the mortal remains of Elijah Benamozegh. There, among the uniform tombs we had some difficulty in finding the one I sought. Nothing distinguished it to the eye of the visitor. I dismissed my young guide, and beneath the burning sun of Tuscany I remained for a long time in prayer at the tomb of the master.

And now I write that which will have no deep significance except for a very small number of my

*Hebrew title given rabbis among Sephardic Jews.

readers, for those only who believe in the existence of invisible forces, in the efficacy of prayer, in mysterious influences, profound and decisive, which come to us from the world into which those have entered whom we call the dead, but who are infinitely more alive than are we: it was from this hour that I understood Elijah Benamozegh, and the doctrine he had shown me. From this hour I truly felt myself his disciple.

XVII

THE CHRISTIAN CRISIS

After this pilgrimage to Leghorn, the thought of the master seemed admirably clear and logical to me, and I was aflame with the desire to make it known to others as it appeared to me. I addressed myself to the *Univers Israelite* which the year before had published my impressions of a visit to the synagogues of Toledo, under the pseudonym of Loetmol, and I gave a series of articles to that journal which I called: *Elijah Benamozegh and the Solution of the Christian Crisis.* The title indicates the nature of my thoughts at that time.

It was the epoch when the Catholic Church, and all Christianity with it, found themselves shaken by the modernist movement. My friendly relations with the members of the small group, called *l'École de Lyon,* and of which the excellent review of Pierre Jay Demain was during too short a time the organ, helped me to understand the new tendencies.

I said in this article, that the different churches are going through a critical period; there is no dogma that is not shaken, no belief that is not

doubted; a gust of reform more violent than that of the sixteenth century blows through the Christian world. Christians of all communions, orthodox, liberals, and those among them who have ceased to believe, all of these are made aware of this evident fact, that all the reforms at present within Christendom are really tending toward Judaism. The dogmas which are decidedly crumbling after having been considered during the centuries as impregnable fortresses, without which no Christian faith was possible, are precisely those which Israel stubbornly denied for nineteen hundred years. The ideal which little by little emerges from the haze of dogmatics, and in which certain spirits, keener than they knew, saw evidence of the Judaization of the Christian people, is the ideal of the prophets, and Christianity tends more and more to transform itself into *Messianism* in conformity with the Jewish conception. Now, be it noted, the two words have exactly the same meaning with only this difference, that the first discloses all the Hellenic influence which the disciples of Jesus underwent, whilst the second takes them back to pure Hebraic thought.

One would be mistaken in thinking that the picture I held up only reflected the personal feelings of a soul detached from Christian dogmatism, and that I exaggerated the importance of the movement.

An anonymous group of Catholic writers expressed themselves a few years later, in an *Humble Supplication to His Holiness Pope Pius X,* thus:

"The Christian soul has been shaken in its security, and doubts having beset it concerning the solidity of the structure which sheltered its religious life, it has felt it needful to examine its foundations. And this not through a spirit of revolt, nor to shake off the yoke of the faith, but on the contrary, in order to attain to a faith more beautiful and more enlightened. This state of mind is widespread: we have met it in France, in England, in Germany, in America, in Italy; it wears the priest's cassock, the lawyer's cloak, the officer's uniform, the workingman's blouse, the professor's gown, it does not alone frequent the universities, it lives in the seminaries; it is not 'modernist,' it is modern, this is incontrovertible. Or, rather it is the soul that never dies, which lives today, which lived yesterday, which will live tomorrow, which necessarily has always lived, which lived and will live forever in the life of its time."*

Face to face with the poignant anxiety of the Christian soul, I tasted the peace of him, who after

*Ce qu 'on a fait de l'Eglise, p. xviii, Paris, Alcan, 1912.

the tempest, has happily entered port. I felt that I owed to Benamozegh, with the development of my religious conscience, the possession of a simple luminous truth, which came to be for me a power and a sure guide in the chaos of beliefs. I understood Catholicism henceforth, as I had never understood it before. I came into possession of the key to the problem of religions, in their successive phases, and the conflicts of the hour were no longer mysterious to me, because I had discovered their first cause in the very beginnings of Christianity, separated from the venerable trunk on which it should harmoniously have continued to grow.

This clear vision of things made it possible for me to await with confidence the solution of the future, a solution as certain as were the difficulties of the moment, for it appeared as the culmination of a providential plan: the return to the purity of primitive faith. "To a close observer, I said: everything on the battlefield of ideas, as in outward events, tends each day to confirm it anew. This faith that the philosophy of history reveals to us, that shows us that the world has a purpose toward which the eternal wisdom directs it, this was the faith of Benamozegh."

I attempted to give a summary as clearly as

possible in this sketch of Benamozegh and the Christian Crisis, of the ideas developed by the master in his *Introduction* to *Israel and Humanity* and concluded with the following words:

"Let the Israelites lift up their heads and again become conscious of their holy mission! They have their word to say in the present situation, the liberating word. Let us help our brothers, according to the word of Mazzini 'to turn the new divine page.' Others will come after Benamozegh, who will draw from the works of this valiant champion of Hebraism, ideas for new and important works.

"May the Christians understand at last in what this new revealing of the Revelation must consist, of which all have a presentiment and which all would bring about, the preliminary signs of which may already be discerned in most of their churches, even in those that seem dedicated by their very essence to an irremediable crystallization. May they recognize that the return to Hebraism is the key to the religious question of the present and of the future. Debates on this question preoccupied the first centuries of the Christian Church, and reformers of all eras disputed over it, and never reached a solution, and it is still perplexing those

souls of our own day, no longer able to believe in Christianity, and longing still to believe.

"To those who from one side or another, may be alarmed at the thought of reforms to be achieved, and of the antiquity of the beliefs to be corrected or replaced, I answer in the words of the monk Columban to Pope Gregory the Great, which so well sums up the whole thought of Benamozegh:

'It is certain that error is ancient, but the truth by which error is condemned is always more ancient still.' "

No one among the readers of *L'univers Israelite* knew who the author of this sketch on Benamozegh was, and I remember having had it read in Lyons without any one suspecting that I had written it. Of course, I was obliged to guard my anonymity, faithful in this to the thought of the master, which I interpreted as considering it my first duty to cause my mother no new anxiety concerning my religion. Nevertheless, in the providential nexus of cause and effect, these articles were to be an abundant source of benediction to me.

The pages that I have just cited came to the notice of Père Hyacinthe, who had come from a winter's sojourn at Rome. He was much impressed by them and conceived a desire to know the author.

This was the beginning of the most holy and most perfect friendship that can exist in this world, the incomparable delights of which it was given me to enjoy for nine years. The homage I paid to the learned man of Israel in writing these articles, in order to spread his doctrines, were of service to me also in connection with a great Christian, and in bringing together two souls, the remembrance of which is infinitely precious to me.

Benamozegh departed, gave Père Hyacinthe to me.

XVIII

PÈRE HYACINTHE

THIS GREAT soul never ceased to evolve toward a truly Catholic conception of religion. The Bible remained his daily food and the monotheistic faith of Moses and the prophets the very breath of his life. At the Monastery of the Carmelites his superior had already said to him: "The Lord has endowed you for the ministry of the Word, but I have one fault to find with you, which is that in your sermons you more often quote the Old Testament than the New." In one of his lectures at the Cirque d'Hiver, in 1878, he uttered the following words which indicate the tendency of his religious views: "If I were to be a Theist in a vital positive sense, it would not be with the Idealist philosophers and still less with the Christian Deists, it would be with the Jews and the Moslems, two religions sprung not from the brain of a dreamer, but from the robust loins of the Semitic patriarchs, the one with Israel, the other with Ishmael; and rather because the first is above the second, as is the free woman above the slave, I would go to sit in the shade of the synagogue; French

in nationality, Jew in religion, I would attach myself to the theism of Revelation and of miracle, I would worship with Israel, this God of Moses greater than the God of Plato."

More recently in a pamphlet dedicated to Max Nordau, "Who Is the Christ?" he definitely expressed himself on the subject of the deification of Jesus:

"Such substitution of a man for God," he wrote, "is the great sin of Christianity, and it is with just indignation that we true monotheists repudiate it. The mistake made by the Church of Rome in proclaiming the infallibility of the Pope, is a small thing by the side of this. Let us hasten to have done with these two idolatries, but let us begin with the oldest and the most sinful."

The new vision of Judaism, the doctrine set forth by Benamozegh, was then well timed to be of deepest interest to the great Christian orator. Before returning to France, he had made a detour to Leghorn in order to meet and discuss religious questions with Rabbi Samuele Colombo, the disciples, and the son of the great Leghorn sage.

Of the latter he said to them: "My sympathy for Benamozegh is the more keen, because I find

my own oldest and most cherished thoughts so admirably expressed by his pen. I have never ceased to desire the reconciliation of religion and science, of Judaism and of Christianity, and I am convinced that from their union depends in great part the future of the world."

Père Hyacinthe quite naturally expressed his desire to correspond with the author of the articles which had revealed the lofty religious personality of Benamozegh to him, and his interest was redoubled when he learned that it was not a Jew, but a Catholic by birth, who was converted to the doctrines of the Leghorn rabbi. Great was his surprise when he learned my name, for I was not unknown to him.

Some years before this time, in the company of one of my Salvation Army friends, I had called upon M. and Mme. Loyson, who were then visiting Lyons. Mme. Loyson, who wore a Bishop's Cross, received the visitors in the absence of the Father, with ecclesiastical solemnity. Her poor French, the English accent exaggeratedly amusing, with which she enunciated her theological theories, created an impression of a fantastic religion from across the sea, which was probably an element in the lack of success of the attempted reformation of Père Hyacinthe in France. I remember that she

asked my companion if he believed in the necessity of baptism. The Salvationist, who by birth was of the Waldensian Church, did not believe in any kind of sacrament, and replied to her that no rites had any binding character for him. Then Mme. Loyson arose, with great dignity: "In that case," said she, "let us stop here, for we are too far apart to understand each other." Père Hyacinthe, who arrived in the meanwhile, detained us with his usual affability, and we talked whth him for a few moments. At a later time I saw him again alone. Possibly I told him at that time something of my religious problems. I do not remember this detail, but in any case he had not forgotten my name, and he was greatly astonished to hear it mentioned at Leghorn in such unexpected circumstances. I received a letter from Père Hyacinthe, in which he wrote me of his visit to the disciples of the Rabbi of Leghorn, and in which he expressed a keen desire to meet me as soon as possible. I went to Geneva to see him in the summer following his return from Italy.

My religious position was to him a cause of profound and endless astonishment. It was without doubt the first case of the kind which he had come upon since the beginning of his long career. He admitted that the crisis in my religious life had carried me far beyond the point where he himself

had halted, but it seemed inexplicable to him that, after having undergone so radical an inward change, I succeeded in apparently remaining a Catholic. His spirit haunted by the need of absolute truth could not be satisfied with half-way measures; he was bent upon governing all his actions according to pure logic, and if the rejection of one dogma had sufficed to take him outside of the Church, it seemed impossible to him that I could remain within it, while denying almost all the others. On the other hand, he was still too much of a Catholic at heart to think it possible to continue to receive the sacraments, without that entire belief which they exact of the faithful.

I had arranged a small manuscript in Latin for my own use in order to follow the mass, which was wholly taken from the Missal, only those expressions contradictory of the Jewish faith being omitted, and I introduced no other changes except those that placed the eucharistic rites in harmony with my beliefs. If the Credo stopped at the first article, *visibilium omnium et invisibilium,* on the other hand, the preface, the *Sanctus, the memento* of the living and the dead, the Lord's Prayer remained almost without abbreviation.

Père Hyacinthe asked me to lend him this little book, and in returning it to me, he said: "I under-

stand you, but I do not envy you." However, everything leads me to believe to the contrary, that he envied me more than he understood me, for he suffered over his spiritual isolation, and nothing would have been more precious to him than to be able, without strain upon his conscience, to have enjoyed communion with believing souls. But I had settled the problem for myself, and strangely, it was to the advice of a rabbi that I owed that provisional solution which satisfied my filial desire without doing violence to my deepest religious convictions.

My venerated friend had not yet come to understand Judaism as I did, and its dual aspect did not seem clear to him. How could Christians grasp at the first, a doctrine that Jews themselves had so much difficulty in understanding?

M. Loyson wrote to me on March 15, 1905: "I read with interest everything that comes from Loetmol. But will the dry bones pay heed to you? They are very dry indeed, and as the Vulgate has it *sicca vehementer.* Beautiful and simple as the religion of Israel may be in other ways, it cannot, in its traditional form, be a solution in the crisis through which we are passing; firstly because it is essentially *ethnic,* and in ceasing to be that, it would lose its originality, and would no longer be anything

more than simple theism; and secondly because its sacred book, which is ours too, falls, as does the book that is exclusively our own, under the blows of that criticism, which will finally destroy that which refuses to evolve. There is need in Judaism of an evolution or a new creation at its side, like that St. Paul wrought for the Nations, minus that which has vitiated it, the expectation of the immediate end of the world, exclusive salvation through faith in Jesus and the divinity or quasi divinity of Jesus. Let us then invoke that spirit without which the work of the exegetic and historic criticism will be of no avail. The scholars destroy; only the spirit of God can create."

But what is this new creation of St. Paul if it is not in principle the universalistic aspect of Judaism, that the apostle was mistaken in wishing to make triumphant through the abolition of the Mosaic law? As to the part played by this law, Père Hyacinthe, remaining more Paulinian than he himself believed, retained his doubts:

"The point on which I for my part am not convinced is the perpetuity of the priesthood of Israel, and of the ethnic law of which it is the guardian. It seems to me that there is in this a sort of Jewish *ultramontanism* which haughtily isolates itself from the rest of mankind, with the pretence of subordi-

nating it. I would voluntarily say with St. Paul: There is neither Jew nor Greek, adding in place of the Messiah Jesus, in God and in Humanity. Israel ever retains the glory of having preserved for humanity and transmitted to it, the treasure which it did not recognize: God, the moral Law, and the coming Reign of Justice. I would gladly be a proselyte of the gate, not of the gate of a national temple, but of the Temple Universal into which the King of Glory shall come in." (Jan. 13, 1908)

On this point he did not greatly differ with me. That which he was ever seeking, and at times with veritable anguish, was the place to be assigned to Jesus. He saw clearly what it is not, but did not as clearly see what it is. The question seemed obscure to him, and in whatsoever way he attempted to solve it, formidable.

"I gave you all my thought at Lyons," he wrote me on May 27, 1905. "You have seen how slowly I progress, and chiefly for two reasons, first in order to do no hurt to any one by rash words, secondly, not to be compelled by my conscience to go backward after having gone forward. I have not receded from the position taken in my pamphlet, *Who is the Christ?* because I had thought it over sufficiently. On the day that I shall see better and more clearly and surely, I shall not hesitate to say so."

And several days later:

"You are in truth a Judaizing Christian in the serious and practical sense of the word. Wholly recognizing the Hebrew Church as the Mother-Church, and while finding fault with Christians for having made Jesus equal to, and in a sense having substituted him for the Eternal, I have kept an attachment profoundly different from yours, for this same Jesus. Many interrogation points thrust themselves before my reason in my constant and solitary reflexions, but my soul has not changed, and what I wrote in that pamphlet I would again sign today. There are those who have said that there are contradictions in these pages, as there are in me. I do not think so, but if that be true, I reply, that God can unite in a higher synthesis what seems contradictory in the infirmity of our faculties. Let us then continue our journey under the eye of God, which will guide us. Let us help one another and take each other by the hand, governed by what he puts into our consciences and into our hearts day by day."

One cannot but admire the loyalty of this aged man, who after having left the Church on grounds seeming to him of first importance, and which I presented to him as quite secondary, saw himself at the close of his life obliged to reconstruct the edifice of

his faith on new foundations. He more clearly defines his thought on Jesus in another letter, dated January 19, 1908:

"The chief reason why the Jews do not accept Christianity is that the latter departed from its origins in creating a God of secondary importance, as Justin Martyr said. And little by little, after having made Jesus equal to the Heavenly Father, have we not practically substituted him for the Heavenly Father? As to Jesus, there is still a difference between us concerning him. If I mistake not, be occupies a minor place for you, and even in this place is subject to much criticism. For me, Jesus remains a mystery which I cannot explain to myself, but he also remains an object of admiration and of love. I know him by the footprints, incomplete though they be, that he has left on history, and also by the poetic radiance of his person, in the legends of his birth and of his death. I know him again by the profound effect that this enigmatic being has exercised over me, throughout the course of my life, and above all, since my priesthood. In order to detach myself from him I must renounce my very self, and have torn from me a large part, not only of my feelings, but of my mind, I was almost about to say my very flesh and blood. This is why I am a Christian despite the many reservations that

I make, not only regarding Catholicism, but regarding Christianity itself. If I am mistaken God will come to the help of my weakness and my integrity. If Loetmol is right on the subjects on which we differ, though they do not divide us, he will obtain for me a ray of the Shekinah. The gods, said the ancients, give to men only such light as they need for each day."

Père Hyacinthe was right in saying that even this grave question of Jesus on which we differed, was not of such a nature as to separate us. He felt himself closer to me than to many others, who having developed in another direction, possibly preserved ties more real, if not more obvious with Christianity, but who were in reality much further away from his substantial beliefs than I was. He liked my attitude of continued respect for Catholicism. He knew that he could ask me to accompany him to church, in the course of our walks, where we prayed, united in feeling. Thus there were bonds between us that were very tender and very strong.

More than once moreover, at Geneva and at Nice, he desired to take part with me in the services at the synagogue and thus witness to his veneration for the Mother Church, fallen in great part, but glorious still and rich in memories and in prom-

ises. "To me it seems a ruin," he said, "and I see no indication that this ruin is about to be rebuilt. It is preserved for a purpose that we cannot foresee. Israel and the Catholic Church are to me the two great living enigmas."

Chief Rabbi Wertheimer of Geneva, on the Day of Atonement, in order to do honor to us who were Gentiles, invited us to take our places beside him in the sanctuary. Against the scepticism which he often affected in intimate circles, we occasionally had to defend the spiritual treasure of Judaism: "Yes, without doubt," said he to us one day, "we possess this treasure but it is to Judaism as the winds in the Aeolian bottles." Père Hyacinthe, who respected him, and who had a lofty conception of the position of a learned man in Israel, was troubled over the reputation of a disillusioned rabbi, that Christian circles of Geneva had given to Dr. Wertheimer. One day he said to him: "I hear from many sources that you have no religion, but I always come to your defense. Am I right or wrong?" "You are right, Father," said Rabbi Wertheimer, taking both his hands, "I believe *as you do.*"

Nothing was more precious to Père Hyacinthe than to feel thus united to other souls across the barriers of creeds, and I succeeded in the last years of his life in bringing him closer to the soul of ancient Israel.

XIX

THE MODERNISTS

I PERSUADED Père Hyacinthe to give a religious address at Lyons on his return from the south in April, 1905.

The pastor, Leopold Monod, placed the Evangelical Church at our disposal for this purpose, and it was an occasion for the liberal Catholics to join with the Protestants around the pulpit occupied by this great Christian, whose eloquent word has remained unforgetable to all those whose souls were receptive to its moving power.

It was at the time when the "École de Lyon" was flourishing. Thus was styled a little group of Catholic modernists, alike active and distinguished, whose organ was the "Revue Demain," edited by Pierre Jay, of distinguished religious and literary standing. M. Léon Chaine, who in the Dreyfus Affaire had openly taken sides against the reactionaries, and whose two works *Les Catholiques Francais et leurs Difficultés Actuelles* and the *Menus Propos d'un Catholique Liberal,* had received deserved attention, was known as a sympathetic repre-

sentative of this group. As a layman he enjoyed more independence than the churchmen, and it was he who on the occasion of this visit of Père Hyacinthe gathered about the latter, in his salon, all of his liberal friends. There were a number of Catholic priests there, most of the Protestant ministers of the city, and a number of militants of the modernist party.

Père Hyacinthe replied with his usual good grace to all the questions put to him, and he particularly dwelt upon the rôle of Jesus, the place he occupies in history, and the mystery that still surrounds his person. He spoke of his heart's devotion to him whom Christian generations had called the Saviour, and ended by saying: "After all, perhaps Loetmol is right." These words were enigmatic to all, except to the Abbé Jean de Bonnefoy, who had mentioned Loetmol in his audacious little book *Vers l'Unité de Croyance*, and whose gently sceptical smile greeted the orator's closing words. It seemed that the ideas set forth by the latter troubled the Protestants more than they did the Catholics. "Father," said Pastor Æschimann to him in a low voice, as they walked into the adjoining room for tea, "surely you at least believe in the absolute holiness of Jesus?" Père Hyacinthe, after hesitat-

ing for some moments replied, "Sir, God alone is absolutely holy."

It seemed to us, to my friends and to me, that it was highly desirable that the contact between adherents of different faiths achieved in the course of this meeting should be maintained, and we considered organizing in a permanent way. As for me, I thought that Christians of different Churches could not come together without placing themselves, though unconsciously, on purely Jewish ground, in accepting the theories on *Noachism* of Benamozegh, whose pure and simple doctrines could alone supply a common platform. It was the altogether apostolic zeal of a worthy priest of Grenoble, Abbé Samuel, who encouraged the realization of this plan. For a long time he had busied himself with the dissenting Churches, and with practical efforts to bring them back to the Roman Church. The quiet hermitage in which he lived, above the Isère, where one could enjoy an admirable view of the Alps, was the constant meeting-place of representatives of all imaginable sects. Salvationists, Baptists, Methodists, Sabbatarians succeeded one another, eager to converse with this priest, who greatly enjoyed hearing them discuss religious problems, and put to them insidious theological questions. His soul retained, as did his blue eyes, the innocence of a child. Firm

in his Catholic faith, he had the great and rare merit of never doubting the good faith of others.

I also went to visit M. Samuel and introduced to him the pastor Leopold Monod, ever nobly receptive to all that could further the union of those of good will. Both agreed to organize, and to preside over a small interdenominational gathering, which was held at Lyons with a certain amount of success, even tho the reactionary journals accused us the following day, of shaking the pillars of the Temple. Nevertheless we succeeded in founding a *Society for Religious Study,* bringing together the followers of different creeds, and the religionists unattached to any church. These meetings continued with more or less regularity during two or three years. A subject, decided upon in advance, was discussed on each occasion, by a speaker chosen in turn from the different sects, and there followed general discussion; an excellent opportunity for all to learn to know and to respect one another. If an embarrassing question to the churchmen present were raised by some dull-minded person, the pastors themselves would come to the rescue in order to sustain their Catholic colleagues. The truly brotherly spirit which obtained in these meetings at the Hotel Bayard, has left blessed memories with all those who had part in them.

In truth we were far from the point of departure of the excellent Abbé Samuel. The flock had outstripped the shepherd, and leaving him on the plain, standing still in his simple and outworn theology, had established itself on the heights. The existence of our Lyons' Association was revealed to the religious world by divers articles which appeared in the foreign press, and became the occasion of a voluminous correspondence for me, with Christians of all Churches, notably in Germany and in England. It was in this way that I entered into relations with the venerable founder of the Theistic Church of London, the Rev. Charles Voysey, who greeted my religious evolution with enthusiasm. He found therein the substance of that which had taken him from adherence to the Articles of Faith of the Anglican Church, to the profession of pure prophetic monotheism.

The decrees of Pius X against Modernism put an end at one and the same time to the activity of the "École de Lyon" and to the efforts at reconciliation attempted, with some success, by our interdenominational association. The Catholic priests, finding themselves henceforth unable to take part in the meetings, no longer showed the same interest, and it was decided to wait the coming of more auspicious times before resuming them.

In the meanwhile I formed another plan which met with the full approval of Père Hyacinthe,—that a letter be addressed to the rabbinate throughout the world, explaining the position of Christians by birth, detached from the dogma of the Churches, converted to the religion of Moses and the prophets, and asking of the scholars in Israel some kind of official recognition of their religious status. This would be, according to my way of thinking, an official recognition of the position of the Noachide, to be made by the authorized representatives of Judaism.

One could assuredly neither contest the solid scriptural foundations nor the admirable human completeness of the doctrine preached by Benamozegh, and defended in his books. Their practical character and their application to the religious status of the present time could alone be challenged, and thus his doctrines would be openly promulgated. This proclamation would be heard at the hour when all Christendom was passing through a serious crisis, and when the Modernists, through the pen of Father Tyrell, had just proposed to the Roman authority, as the only basis on which it could henceforth exercise a spiritual influence over the development of the human spirit, unity in that which is essential, liberty in that which is not essential, and charity

in all things. On the unity in what is essential, the Mother-Church, guardian of biblical Revelation, had a word to say,—advice to give. But in order that the call should be heard, and be presented in all its importance, it seemed to me indispensable that it should be signed by Père Hyacinthe. It would have been at the same time, the crowning of the religious development of that great soul, which had not ceased, in the course of the last years, to come closer to the religion of Jesus, not the religion which he was supposed to have created, for Père Hyacinthe now recognized that he had never created a new religion, but only followed the religion which he had professed all his life.

Nevertheless my venerated friend, who keenly desired the letter to appear, hesitated to sign it. He wrote me on May 27, 1905:

"You have every qualification to write it, in giving to it entirely and loyally the form which your illustrious master would have given it, since Benamozegh kept you away from ethnic and priestly Judaism in order to make of you a monotheistic and in a sense a Christian Gentile. Your letter might be preceded by an introduction signed with my name, in which without accepting all your views, I would say how much closer I have come

to them in these last years, and I would indicate what the views of many Christians are. Thus our two testimonies, with certain differences, would support one another and would become one. If all the same, after having prayed and reflected, you remain convinced that I should write this letter, I might decide to do it myself, so important does the thing seem to me, and publish it under my name, but it would not be a veritable Noachide manifesto, as it would be if written by you."

What restrained Père Hyacinthe was the question of Jesus. His son pressed him in his way to free himself from the bonds of historic Christianity. He said to him, speaking of me*: "His letter is very remarkable . . . Notice that he tells you exactly what in my frenzy I urged in these last days: that Christians, even the best and the broadest, are now destroying the cause of religion by their very fidelity to the letter of their faith." It is none the less true that my plan might seem in the eyes of the public a formal disavowal of Christianity, and was of a nature to rouse the scruples of a soul which continued piously each

* Citation from a letter from Père Hyacinthe.

year to celebrate the anniversary of his priesthood.*

The fear of seeming to abandon, not the Christian dogma—he had in fact rejected it, and his Christianity was nothing more than a "form and a phase of eternal monotheism"—but the person of Jesus himself, was for Père Hyacinthe a serious obstacle to the honest setting-forth of the religious problem in the form of a manifesto to the rabbinate, at least in the form that I had conceived it.

The plan was not carried out, and if it is to be regretted, one must imagine there would have been good-will on the part of the wise men in Israel, to respond to this Christian appeal, and an impressive unanimity in that reply. But today I do not think one can be quite certain of either the one or the other, if one were to judge by the restraint, most praiseworthy in itself, with which official Judaism expresses itself on the origins of Christianity, and on the respective positions of the two religions. This fact can only heighten the merit of Benamozegh in the eyes of all men, for on these delicate questions he had the rare courage

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*I have just celebrated the anniversary of my priestly ordination (June 14, 1905). I disavow all the errors which may attach to it, but I know and I feel that on that day something great and divine came into my soul which remains there and will remain there. (June 15, 1905).

to speak to Jews and to Christians with a frankness, to which men of religion of the future will pay greater homage than do his contemporaries.

A movement which arose at this time in Paris Jewry, with which Père Hyacinthe was more closely connected than I was, began to occupy our thoughts. Beginning in 1899 Père Hyacinthe had spoken on several occasions to a small company of Jews, who felt the need, many of them quite vaguely, of a religious renascence. Pastor Charles Wagner exercised a certain influence upon them. It appeared, from the letters of my venerated friend, that different tendencies of most unequal religious value came to light, and if he were ready to encourage some of these, he was far from being willing to encourage others. It was in thinking of those sincere souls, really desirous of making an effort to win the younger generation from an increasing materialism, that he said to me on Dec. 5, 1907: "Be not unjust to the Modernists of Israel, as the Pope has been towards those of Christendom. There are in both, true ideas and legitimate aspirations, to which the errors of some amongst them should not close our eyes."

But, on the other hand, he had too keen a sense of tradition not to condemn the subversive ideas that were being expressed at this time: "This is

a new religion and at the same time a hybrid religion. The distinction between Jew and Greek once abolished, circumcision and the Mosaic Law put aside, and replaced by abstract or agricultural festivals of the type of those of the French Revolution, or of certain cults of nature, it is no longer the alliance made with the Fathers and renewed by the prophets. It is a vague and superficial deity that will satisfy and exalt no one, and that will not give rise to high and holy enthusiasms."

At another time he wrote: "Oh! remain in the mystery of your ancient synagogue, and if perhaps it is without hope of conquering the world of today, it has none the less sure promises of the world eternal, where God's elect will take their places with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."

I ought to say that at that time my knowledge of Judaism was chiefly doctrinal and historic, thus in a sense theoretic. Benamozegh had given me a lofty conception of it, which had truly admitted me into an unknown sanctuary, glimpsed in the days of my youth, and my soul was gladdened by the consciousness of perfect communion with the past which Père Hyacinthe so eloquently interpreted. I had had the privilege of which I now understand all the significance, of seeing Judaism

live through the last representatives of a generation of believers who have disappeared in our day. I thought in my faith as a proselyte, that figures such as Simon Lévy were to be found everywhere, and that the prophetic spirit of the Leghorn savant animated the soul of every rabbi. I could not conceive to what a degree the ignorance of Hebrew had become general, and how very much family observances were abandoned. It would have seemed to me contrary to all probability if any one had informed me that synagogue worship, for a great number of modern Israelites, is no longer anything but a collective routine, devoid of every spiritual element, and that the youth were growing up in complete detachment from Jewish traditions.

I was then quite naturally impelled to condemn the innovating tendencies which I could not justify by a correct understanding of present facts. Liberal, in the matter of biblical exegesis, like my friends of the "School of Lyons," I was conservative toward all that concerns traditional worship.

Then, too, there was the spirit of my master, which at times was surprisingly audacious in the domain of theology, but which ever remained a militant defender of true Jewish Orthodoxy. The long discussions in which Pére Hyacinthe had taken part, looking toward a reform movement in

Paris Jewry, finally culminated in the founding of a small distinct group under the name of *Union Liberale Israelite.* On the day after the inauguration of its house of prayer, I published a series of articles in the *Univers Israelite,* under the title, *Lettre 'dun Chrétien a' un Israelite sur la Reform Culturelle.* It was friendly in spirit and most measured in form, but I ardently defended the rights of tradition against unconsidered innovations. Aside from the question of the Sabbath, I did not touch upon the most serious questions,—I mean those which later were to be the most important in the task of reconciliation. I did not feel competent to do this, and I contented myself in establishing, according to my personal experience, a comparison between different religions, in order to throw light upon the special psychology of Judaism, which one must be careful not to alter by borrowing from other cults.

The conclusion that may be drawn from an intelligent and conscientious comparison of different religions, seems to me still to have a convincing power, outside of all question of principles. It should suffice, for example, that the Apostle Paul introduced certain customs into the primitive Church as a sign of rupture with Judaism, and of liberation from the yoke of the Law, which was

enough in the eyes of the Israelite to give a special value to the reverse practices.

These articles which were much liked in conservative circles, without alienating from me the sympathies of liberals, are still of a kind that I would sign today without changing them in any way, because they are in agreement with a vision of Judaism which some later observations have in no wise changed.

XX

OCTOBER, 1908

NEVERTHELESS my life continued peacefully at the side of my dearly loved mother. I spent my evenings with her, usually absorbed by the study of Hebrew texts, which did not seem to surprise her, and she never put the slightest question that could have forced upon me the cruel alternative of disguising the truth, or of inflicting pain upon her. She was content to see me take part in the services of our parish, and to receive communion in her company on important holidays.

The reading of various works inspired by the modernist movement, the visits of my liberal friends, the reunions of our interdenominational association for religious studies, which she gladly attended as often as her precarious health allowed, had given a breadth to her Catholicism that singularly quickened the character of her personal piety. We read the most inspiring books together. Saint Augustine and Pascal were our favorites, and I still possess precious remembrances of those happy years, those note books in which my mother copied out with

her own hand the passages of mystic writers which we had chosen as themes for our meditations.

When I entered into discussion with the heirs of Benamozegh regarding the work of revision, preparatory to the publication of the master's book, "Israel and Humanity," she was interested in the project, and made no objection when she saw me undertake the burdensome task, excepting insofar as the physical fatigue might be hurtful to me. In her letters written during my vacation of 1908, she wrote me concerning my work on the Italian manuscript as an important undertaking for me, without evincing the slightest religious concern, but I do not believe that she ever yielded to the curiosity of reading a single one of the pamphlets which were heaped on my work-table.

Alas! the hour of grievous parting was approaching. My mother had once said to me on a day of communion: "I asked of God this morning one earthly favor;—that He grant me another ten years of life, not more, for I think that after that period my work at your side will have been accomplished." The ten years had passed, and on several occasions she spoke to me in the very words of Monica, the saintly mother of Augustine: "My son, I confess to thee, as far as I am concerned, nothing in this life continues to hold me, and I know not what to do

here, nor why I remain here any longer." These letters of August, 1908, which my mother sent me while, according to my custom, I was traveling in Italy, tender and spiritual as always, contained unmistakable allusions to her approaching end. Some sentences of the last one which reached me before my return from my vacation, were to me like a last farewell, when I reread them through my tears after she had left this world.

I brought my mother back from the country early in September, and she was confined to her bed a few days thereafter. Her condition, however, neither alarmed me nor the doctor seriously. I was terrified when she asked for the last sacrament, but in order to allay my fears, she told me that she had always believed in the efficacy of extreme unction as a sacrament for the sick, and that after all, if it were God's will she would gladly make the sacrifice of living a little longer for love of me. This was, however, only a pious pretence. She felt her strength rapidly declining, and spoke of it to those who visited her, requesting them to say nothing to me that would distress me. Thus she lived on about ten days, though constantly preoccupied in concealing the gravity of her condition from me. It was not until October 4th that I became conscious

of imminent danger. It was the eve of the Day of Atonement.

Since that first Day of Atonement which saw me as a youth entering the synagogue in a spirit of curiosity I never failed to attend the Kol Nidre service. For the first time, and in what agonizing circumstances, I was not to take part in that solemn prayer, from which I drew strength to sustain me during the rest of the year. But before night-fall, while I was at my dear patient's bedside in company of the Sister who took care of her, my mother who had hardly spoken during the entire day turning suddenly to me said sweetly: "Thou shouldst go out this evening, my son, do go." I write down this impressive fact as it happened. One may see in it a simple coincidence, but possibly also a mysterious intuition of the dying. I was as one rooted to the spot so great was my amazement. The thought that my mother had read my mind, that she had penetrated my thoughts to their most secret depths, and in that hour had received from God a vision lofty and pure enough to understand the beliefs of her son, to accept them, and to bless them—this thought gripped me as thrilling evidence. I protested that I did not want to leave my dearly loved patient, and that I would not leave the house, but she insisted, repeating authoritatively: *"Thou must*

go!" evincing so great a desire to have me go, that the Sister herself begged me to defer to her wish.

I went to the synagogue, arriving before the service began. In what a state of mind I took part in this service, in this same place, where long ago I had had my first revelation of ancient Judaism! In compelling myself to follow the prayers of the ritual, I could not restrain my tears, and yet through the intense emotion which seemed to choke me, there was ineffable peace, because I felt the conviction of having been faithful to the light of God, and of thus finding myself united with my dying mother, by ties stronger and surer than all outward ceremonies.

I hastened to return to my patient, and it seemed that a noticeable improvement of her condition had occurred during my absence, so much so, that toward midnight the Sister advised me to take some rest. But only an hour had elapsed, when she came to call me saying that my mother was very ill, and that it seemed that her last moment was drawing near. I held my dear dying mother in my arms and I prayed with her. For the religious soul, at such moments, there is a power that triumphs over human nature, and is surely not of this world. Pain is not vanquished, Oh no! It is not stifled under the impenetrable mask of stoicism; it is transfigured

and finds within itself the secret sources of peace. Through my tears I kept repeating to my mother: "God loves thee!" and the motion of her hands which were growing cold, convinced me that she was conscious of my faith. "Thou art giving thyself needless trouble," she murmured, as I sought to alleviate the suffering of her poor body. These were her last words in perfect conformity with her whole life, all self-abnegation. She sweetly breathed her last on the morning of the Day of Atonement.

I closed her eyes, and wished to perform all the religious rites myself that the dead require in a Christian home. Within me at that moment there was the conflict of feelings that Augustine describes in the same unhappy hour. What was tender in him and belonged to his childhood went out in tears, and then was suppressed by a sterner power. I can attest that in those hours of suffering, I was sustained by the consciousness of a spiritual presence, of an invisible aid, more real than any visible help, a certainty of immortality, the deep reality of which the passing of time has not changed.

The funeral of my mother was attended by groups of friends of every denomination in that Church of St. Pothinus which once witnessed the first appearance of Père Hyacinthe as orator of the Catholic pulpit. For some days the good Abbé Samuel com-

forted my mourning in his peaceful hermitage of Grenoble, then another of my friends, Pastor Bourdery, gave me in turn in his modest presbytery at Nantes, the solace of his calm faith and of his brotherly affection.

XXI

ISRAEL AND HUMANITY

"You will have to make serious decisions." Thus did Père Hyacinthe express himself in one of the first letters that he wrote to me after the death of my mother. In this way he alluded to his friendship for me and his interest in my future. He believed the hour had come for me to consecrate myself to religious work, and that I could only do this successfully in the way in which, for so long a time, I had felt the call. Not that he ever advised me to undergo a complete conversion to ethnic and priestly Judaism, but in my particular case the reasons of sentiment, which had held me back up to this time, no longer existing, a definite step no doubt seemed to him more religious, and in any case more logical than my course had been during these last years.

On the other hand, a new question arose for me, and I was compelled to reach a decision. The leaders of the group of liberal Israelites of Paris had made an offer to me which would give me the opportunity for spiritual activity in their midst, and through it give expression to my own ideals. This

offer was made under the most generous and kindest conditions, without exacting from me any modifications whatever of my religious attitude. I had affirmed anew, that I felt myself attached to integral Judaism, its writings and its tradition, that this Judaism truly allowed sufficient freedom of thought, but that this very liberty rendered all the more necessary a fidelity to the forms with which it had been historically invested, and without which its organic unity could not be maintained. One could not, therefore, have expected to see me deflect from this Judaism those Israelites who, by obligation of birth, ought draw from it their way of life. The replies that came to me from Paris following my statement of principles, respected my point of view, and were couched in such terms that Père Hyacinthe, in his letters, stressed all the nobility of the procedure concerning me: "The offers made to you are as liberal and as brotherly as one could desire, and if you do not accept them, it is possible that an unreasoned instinct of the soul, without being *unreasonable,* warns you that you are not destined for this indefinite and uncertain work."

But to the contrary, it was only too evident that the friendly attitude toward me rested, without a doubt, upon different conceptions of Judaism from my own, and what proved this to be true was the

suggestion that after a certain time spent in a Rabbinic School, in another country, I could return with a rabbinic diploma, permitting me to use the title and to occupy the position of rabbi. But this implied that the fundamental question, much the most important in my judgment, was settled. This was to know if I ought to continue in the line of conduct that Benamozegh advised, or to choose another way. The result of the inquiries which I then undertook is too characteristic of the general spirit of Judaism, on this most important point, to permit me to pass over it in silence.

I had seen Chief Rabbi Alfred Lévy two or three times, and one day in the company of Père Hyacinthe. He spoke categorically, recommending to me as the wisest course the religious position taken by the Leghorn master, and I decided it would be useless to question him again on this subject. On the other hand, I did not fail to write to Chief Rabbi Samuele Colombo, disciple and successor of Benamozegh in Leghorn, a man of God, who united modesty with knowledge, as did the true sages of Talmudic antiquity, entering into the minutest details concerning the suggestions which came to me from Paris. He wrote me on the 8th of February, 1909:

"What would Benamozegh think at the present time? To this question I think I can reply with my soul and my conscience, that the great and venerated master would have been as firm now as before, as I am, in the conviction that you can render the greatest and the most considerable service to the cause of Israel in not embracing its priestly law, but in holding yourself so to speak, outside, and above any particular church, which you could not do, once subject to the Law. It is quite true that you could thus give to your religious activity whatsoever form seemed best to you, precisely because you would find yourself in an entirely different position from that of the Israelite by birth. Wheresoever you may continue to think, to preach, to work, expressing your own aspirations and your most sacred convictions, without ever imposing silence on your beliefs, you will feel at home, and you may recognize this liberty to be a providential thing which you will make use of for the good of the holy religion.

"May I take the liberty to express to you an altogether personal opinion, perhaps mistaken, but that I believe to be right? I would say to you, that according to my thinking, if the most brilliant pulpit were open to you as rabbi, and you were prepared to occupy it, in conforming to the multi-

plicity of obligations inherent in such a charge, you would not be able to do as much good, as if, resolved as you are to serve Judaism, you retained your entire independence. Dear Brother, for you are that to me in the full sense of the word, brother in humanity and in faith, brother in heart and in thought, I am conscious of the unusual importance of the words that I address to you, in advising you not to abandon the path pointed out to you by our revered master, and in doing this I believe I remain a humble witness to truth."

About this time a friend in Palestine, with whom I had corresponded for some years in order to study modern Hebrew, consented to put the same question to the Chief Rabbi (Askenazi)* of Jerusalem, for me, as I had put to Dr. Samuele Colombo. He received the identical answer in substance, with a casuistic disquisition on the place that I could occupy in the synagogue, on the way I was to comport myself, even as to how to wear the talith, and to practice the Jewish rites as I thought best, as an expression of personal and supererogatory piety, and not as obligatory precepts. All of this corroborating the advice I had previously received from Benamozegh, proved that the latter

*Jews of German-speaking lands.

had not given me a purely personal doctrine unfounded on tradition.

From another correspondent in Germany, I received a third reply. It came from Dr. Jacob, Rabbi of Dortmund, it was written in sprightly but trenchant style, and it seems worthwhile to translate its most important passages.

"As to your friend who has been advised if he would serve the cause of Israel that he eventually become a rabbi, this is, of all ways, the least effective. We would have one Jew and one rabbi the more! A great thing! At the best, as a proselyte he could for the moment count on some curiosity. For him Christians would no longer exist, but would Jews exist to any greater extent? One more rabbi coming to join the little phalanx of those who, here and there, preach to a dozen Israelites on the superiority of Judaism and its Universal Mission, without ever having, note it well, converted a single soul to their doctrines!"

With the same frankness the distinguished rabbi continued concerning the proposals from the liberal group of Paris to me; severe comments, which probably justified the observations he had made on this subject in his own country, but which is no

way corresponded to facts, as far as they concerned the chief promoters of the Paris movement, whose religious enthusiasm was indubitable.

"The essence of Neo-Judaism," he said, "If one does not wish to disguise the truth by phrases, is not, as far as religion is concerned, to desire the *most* and the *best*, it is to desire the *least*. Yes, less of religion and less of Judaism, and even clothing the little that remains in as Christian a garb as possible. Show me those who go over to this kind of Judaism, because of *religious* motives and not for contrary reasons! To them true religious questions are indifferent. What they desire is a religion that shall hamper them as little as possible. They will gladly answer as did the negro of whom a missionary asked whether the Christians or the Moslems seemed to possess the better religion: 'Me eat all.' In truth, how can a man like your friend, who renounces the world for the love of religion, turn to those who abandon religion for love of the world?"

The rabbi concluded by saying: "This is my advice to your friend: *Er stehe zwischen Judentum und Christentum,* let him remain between Judaism and Christianity, let him deepen with all his strength and with all his soul the truths of

Judaism, chiefly those of the Bible, and let him preach by his pen and his word, as a liberal writer and a liberal speaker. Let him do exactly the contrary to what St. Paul did, in inviting the nations of the earth to come to the God of Israel."

The contrary attitude to that of St. Paul, who, a Jew, preached to his brothers and to the Gentiles the abolition of the Jewish Law, was it not to preach to the Jew obedience to it, while avoiding submission to it oneself, in order not to give the false impression that in the divine economy this law is necessary to the salvation of the non-Jew?

These witnesses, coming from such very different sources and from equally different personalities, present nevertheless, as is clearly perceptible, an impressive unanimity. Père Hycinthe, who was deeply interested in this inquiry, was much impressed by its results, and remained as I did of the opinion that it would be lacking in wisdom to ignore them, by taking a contrary position.

I continued my laborious work on the manuscript of *Israel and Humanity,* in alternating enthusiasm and discouragement, so great were the difficulties connected with it. It was at Algiers in the beginning of 1911, that I began to foresee its completion, and it was finished in the Autumn of that

year. At that time I was in Paris near my venerated friend, who was asked to write the preface to this work. He hesitated for a long time to do this, not that he did not wish to respond to the request, but the matter seemed to him of such great importance that he feared, as usual, not to have given it sufficient thought. Nevertheless, in the course of the daily visits I paid him in his peaceful room in the Rue du Bac, the rough draft of this preface was written out.

In it, Père Hyacinthe expresses his satisfaction in seeing that Israel, which too long had been silent on the question of Christian sources, had at last made its voice heard, "for how can we understand Christianity, if Judaism, the religion whence it is the issue, is misunderstood? It is too often forgotten that Jesus was a Jew. Whether one wishes to acknowledge it or not, one cannot change that fact. The Israelites are our fathers in the faith; it is to them that we owe the inestimable gift of the belief in one God. They, however, to-day owe us the explanation of their protests against our interpretation of the rôle and the teachings of Jesus."

He seemed to foresee the works of modern criticism which tend to deny the historic existence of Jesus, and he equally foresaw the possibility of

saving, even with this hypothesis, the best part of Christianity, in carrying back, to the oldest Hebrew tradition, as did Benamozegh, the foundations of the Christian religion, which appears as an attempted and partial realization of the Messianism of Israel.

"How Christianity thus conceived, can still be allied with the personality of Jesus, is a question that each individual must reverently determine for himself, but its solution no longer directly affects Messianism in its historic evolution. However radical scientific criticism may then be, in its study of Christian origins, of the character and the rôle of Jesus, Christianity no longer remains a finished, perfect, definite religion, because divinely revealed in all its parts, but a beginning of the realization of a plan which existed long before the coming of Jesus."

He concluded by saying that "all that is best in the Christian religion, the faith in the Fatherhood of God, in the regeneration of humanity, in the triumph of peace, of justice, of universal brotherhood, all these gifts which certainly do not come to us from Greek or Roman paganism, but incontrovertibly from tradition, from the He-

brew inheritance, stand and can still legitimately call themselves the religion of Jesus, for we know that he had, and could have had no other religion. It is an historic fact, we know that he instituted no rite, no sacrament, no Church. Born a Jew, he wished to live and to die a Jew, and from the swaddling clothes of circumcision to the embalmed shroud of sepulchre, followed only the rites of his nation."

Père Hyacinthe, the confidant of my religious thoughts, did not live long enough to see in what paths Providence would call me to walk. God had received his soul in his eternal home, four years before I found myself able to be actively occupied in the heart of Judaism. The ways of God seem, in everything that happened to me, much more wondrous than I can explain, or than my readers for the most part are prepared to hear me relate.

Israel is a living marvel,—since its earliest history to its present renascence on the old biblical soil, the development of which is full of promise, and which we welcome with enthusiasm. Everything connected with it baffles human understanding.

In the heart of this everlasting miracle, which is the providential preservation of the Jewish people, a host of smaller miracles without end have come

to pass in the course of the centuries, a cause of delight to the believer, of astonishment to the historian. My own life in turn is one of these miracles. It can hardly be of importance, I know, in the eyes of others, but no one will be surprised that it is so in my own eyes. In this as in all other miracles, the instrument is nothing, the will of the sovereign Master is all. Perhaps it will not have been in vain to relate it, and to say for my small part, in the words of Isaiah: "Behold how I was placed as a sign and wonder in Israel from the Lord of Hosts, who dwelleth in Mount Zion."

XXII

CONCLUSION

HERE MY story ends. What follows will no longer be the history of the Unknown Sanctuary, but that of the Servants of the Sanctuary. After having retraced my steps towards Judaism, I ought to explain how I observed Jews interpret it and live it. But this will be the subject of another book which may command some interest. It may be that I shall write it some day, but the hour for that has not yet come.

If, in conclusion, I am expected to make a confession of my faith, I will only add:

In the heart of the Jewish people the working of the spirit of God, difficult, laborious, but never ending, culminated in the historic phenomenon of Prophetism, unique in the religious annals of humanity, the great miracle of the history of Israel, and like unto a glorious flower into which its national genius blossomed. In the prophets the development of religious thought attained its culmination. Adonai, the God of Israel, revealed himself to them as the one God, father of all men. Humanity being then conceived of as a great fam-

ily, the Jewish faith finally cast aside all national boundaries, or rather, in respecting them, it surmounted them and surpassed them; it no longer knew limitation, either of time or of space; it summarized in the Messianic hope its highest, its most universal aspirations.

But it is not only because of its extent that the Jewish religion takes its place in the first rank of the religious beliefs of humankind, it is because of its essence and its depth. Adonai revealing himself as the God of holiness, it is in the secret conscience that religion henceforth finds its purest and completest expression. All the elements of morality scattered in other cults, find themselves united here as in a sheaf. "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy": this precept, which includes all the others, is at one and the same time for Judaism a religion and a rule of life.

Without denying the value and the influence of other religions, I believe that it is easy to demonstrate that the influence of Israel occupies a place apart in the history of humanity, that between it and other religions there is not only a difference in degree, but a difference in kind. In reasoning thus I do not separate Judaism from its great branches, Christianity and Islam, which have spread over the earth, everywhere carrying the knowledge

of the one God, the God of Moses, and of the prophets. These, the theologians of the synagogue point out to us, are two powerful means that divine Providence has used to carry to the pagan nations the benefits of the Hebraic Revelation in order to prepare them for the coming of the Messianic times.

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But from the Christian side it will be asked of me: Would the development of divine revelation which is manifested in all phases of Jewish history up to the close of the Biblical canon, not have continued, attaining perfection still unkown to Hebrew writings, in those two powerful branches whose vitality is only explained by the presence in them of the life-giving sap that they received from the old trunk of Israel?

It seems to me that two facts claim our attention; in the first place that all of the divine truths which sustain the soul of Christendom and of Islam are Jewish truths, so much so that not one could be cited that Judaism does not possess and that is not borrowed from it. I concede that some of these truths have been better understood and put to better use by Christianity, than by the Jewish people in its entirety, but that is another question. In the second place, there is no doubt that the two great religions, daughters of Hebraism,

have misinterpreted many important Jewish truths, and have appropriated others which they have overlaid by strange additions, constituting alteration but not enrichment.

For example, who can but see that Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and Good Friday proclaim the same truth, a truth that may seem but folly to the human reason in implying that the past can be effaced, that the infinite Mercy annihilates sin in the soul that repents, and places within it the germ of a new life that may express itself in acts of justice and of holiness? But if the effect of this doctrine of regeneration and of salvation through the profession of a particular creed and through the acceptance of certain historic or so-called historic facts, be subordinated to the obligatory carrying out of certain rites, is it not evident that the Revelation which Hebraism has given to us concerning the relations between the human soul and God its Heavenly Father is thereby altered and narrowed?

Let us not forget that while facing the fact of Judeo-Christianity, there is another fact which we must face: it is the existence of millions of pagans, human creatures having the same right to truth, to light, to divine forgiveness that we have, though they have never heard of the Bible nor of

the Gospels. In this difficult situation what is the attitude of those who believe in and who lay claim to the Hebraic revelation, under its Jewish or under its Christian form? True religion must give us an explanation of the status of humanity which will not do violence to our reason, our conscience, or our hearts, and will enable us to believe in the salvation of all men. But the soul secure on the secular rock of Judaism, finds itself at the very centre of a religious synthesis which makes it possible to judge and to understand all the fragments of truth scattered throughout the world. The different religions appear as so many special manifestations, corresponding to the needs of the different races, but grouped around the central Truth, and more or less closely related to one another, according to their distance from, or nearness to it.

The entire human race is thus united in a very real spiritual oneness even though there seems to be, because of the very nature of things, numerous and necessary differences. This does not deter the believer who lays claim to the prophetic tradition, from hastening, through his prayers, the coming of the day when God shall be One and His Name One. What is this future in regard to the perfect and immutable being, who knows neither change nor time,

and whose existence is everlastingly present? It signifies that the one God is really worshipped under many forms, in very different cults, but in the Messianic era, the spiritual world will see unity of worship realized.

Thus the believing Israelite attains through prophetism unto the loftiest divine Revelation in the past, and through Messianism, to the greatest religious hope in the future. His faith makes him a citizen of the world, and his hope of the Kingdom of God comforts him in the sorrows and shadows of the present, by making it possible for him to glimpse a complete manifestation of the eternal truth that is yet to come.

* * * * * * *

But the fact of Christianity is also here, and claims our attention, and I feel constrained to seek an explanation of it. It occupies so important a place in the thoughts of men, it has uplifted and enlightened and strengthened such a multitude of souls for heroic struggles, leading them to the sublimest heights of saintliness; it has revealed itself as a source so prodigiously abundant, of devotion and virtue, of science and art, of poetry and eloquence; it has left its impress on so many races and civilizations, and at the same time has appeared under such a multitude of aspects. It suggests so

many problems, gives rise to so much criticism, and troubles so many consciences because of the divisions and the conflicts it has engendered, the fanaticisms it has inspired, the persecutions it has instigated, and the travesties of which it is the endless subject, that in truth the mind is confused in the presence of so formidable an enigma. Christianity rests on a Revelation of which Israel was appointed guardian, and it teaches on the other hand, that in the plan of a merciful God, the salvation of the nations can only be founded on the condemnation of the people who are the trustees of this revelation. It cannot be possible that a true religion can be built on so flagrant a contradiction. The least that a Christian who had seriously reflected on these problems could say is, that there must be some unfathomed justice in the age-long protest of Israel.

In the XIIIth Century of the Christian era the following event occurred, forming a striking analogy to the Gospel story. A man appeared, possessed of a divine vision, capable of revolutionizing the world, of creating a new religion which might have transformed the occidental world entirely from top to bottom, in taking it back to the pure source whence it sprang. I am speaking of the blessed Francis of Assisi, who before his con-

version, feeling himself chosen for a unique destiny, said jestingly to his gay young companions: "You will see that one day I shall be adored by the whole world." When the humble penitent of Assisi came to Rome, to kneel at the feet of the sovereign pontiff, to explain to him his plan for the reformation of morals, and his ideal of the religious life, Innocent III, versed in politics, did not repulse the strange seraphic apparition, a living reproach to the corruption of the Church of those days. He made haste, however, to clip the wings of the Franciscan idea, while he opened his arms to him who brought it. He hastened to strip it of its originality, and of its vigor, by giving it a monastic setting; in a word, according to the Gospel expression, by putting new wine into old bottles. Later the Church enshrined St. Francis of Assisi on its altars, and no one saw that the bull of canonization in reality proclaimed the failure of the Franciscan ideal, smothered in its germ.

What would have happened if the Judaism of the first century had accepted and embraced the Gospel instead of refusing it? We would today have in our two Talmuds, by the side of the words of Hillel the Saint and of so many other pious scholars, the *Amar R. Yeshua ben Yosef Hannozri,* "words of Rabbi Jesus son of Joseph, the Naza-

rene," of whom it was said: "Surely this learned man was mistaken in the imminent coming of the Kingdom of Heaven in the form of a cosmic upheaval which would change the world, but what sublime things he did say!" Would Judaism, enriched by this spiritual addition, have conquered the pagan world? Would it the better have disentangled from its authentic traditions, the two aspects of the divine Law, the particularist aspect for Israel alone, and the universalist aspect, for all men? No one can say with certainty; all are free to believe it. But Christianity as it is, would not have been born.

Christianity was born of the opposition of Judaism to the preaching of the Gospel, therefore Christians ought to be infinitely grateful to Israel for not accepting it. As for me, convinced that an infinite wisdom directs the religious evolution of humanity according to a providential plan, I could not regret for an instant, that the pagan world should have adopted and interpreted the Gospel story on its own account, and for its own salvation. I refuse, on the other hand, no less energetically to admit that Judaism was wrong in continuing in its hope of the Messianic advent, instead of believing it to be realized. Jerusalem could not abdicate to Rome, and for humanity which still gropes its way

so painfully, this fidelity to the divine compact, leaves open before us all the perspectives of salvation.

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To those of my Christian brothers, who may read these pages, I then address this appeal in closing: you who know only the body of Judaism and who, in the words of the philosopher Renouvier, find it unworthy, have you ever sought to discover its soul? The thought alone, that this soul throbbed in the heart of Jesus, ought to inspire you with the desire to learn to know it. Within it there burns a fire strangely able to throw light upon the destinies of Christendom, and to bring to it the solution of many of the questions that you ask yourselves.

To my brother Israelites I would say on the other hand: the Church, this other living enigma, is in the habit of portraying the Synagogue with the sacred scroll in her hand and a bandage over her eyes. There is much of truth in this picture, not in the sense given to it by theology, but in that which reveals to us at the same time Jewish history and the present state of Judaism. You possess treasures you know not of, or that you know not how to use, and not only do you leave your spiritual patrimony unproductive, you close your eyes, at times voluntarily, to the perception of the

hand of God in the history of Israel. When will you become the conscious instrument of the work that the God of your fathers willed you should achieve in this world?

Benamozegh in the title of his great work summed up universal history, envisaged from the viewpoint of the divine:

"Mankind cannot rise to the essential principles on which society must rest unless it meet with Israel.

"And Israel cannot fathom the deeps of its own national and religious tradition, unless it meet with mankind."

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LET THERE BE LIGHT

In Memory - Joseph Schenker

by

Mr. & Mrs. W. E. Borley.